

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR THE PARISHES OF
BRANSFORD AND LEIGH

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16th April 2024, 7pm at Leigh & Bransford Memorial Hall

Present: 16 Parishioners and Representatives of local organisations

1. ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

Dave Fereday, Chairman of the Parish Council, was elected Chairman for the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD TUESDAY 18th APRIL 2023

Having been previously circulated the minutes were approved unanimously.

3. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Chair Dave Fereday delivered a report on the previous year. The full report is shown in the Appendix.

Throughout the meeting representatives gave thanks and gratitude to Peter King for the selfless dedication he gave to various organisations and groups throughout the parish, as well as his time on the Parish Council. Peter King was a friend to many and will be sadly missed.

Thanks also to Denise Fereday and Ann Sharp for being the providers of the much needed light refreshment after the meeting.

4. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Peter Whatley (MHDC)

Cllr Whatley gave a brief overview of Planning in the Leigh and Bransford area and reiterated the fact that having our Neighbourhood Plan in place is worth its weight in gold.

He also touched upon a couple of up and coming issues:

- 1) New builds potentially being built on greenfield land as there aren't enough brownfield sites in our area.
- 2) That it may become mandatory to collect food waste. On paper it may sound like a good idea, but it wouldn't be without its challenges with cost and carbon omissions being high on the list.

5. REPORTS FROM LOCAL GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

Memorial Hall (Jon Gamble)

Dale Humpries read key points of a report prepared by Jon Gamble who couldn't be with us. Jon's full report is shown in the Appendix.

WI (Elaine Shaw)

An update on the year's events was given by Elaine Shaw and Elaine's report can be seen in Appendix below.

Scouts (Dale Humpries)

Dale said the Scouts are in a really good position with the highlight being that they've formed two new sections: Squirrels (4-6 year olds) and have re-started Pioneer Explorers. Squirrels have 14 members and

Pioneers have 10. All sections are running at capacity with approx 130 members across the board. There are waiting lists so at the present time they're only taking applications from the local Parishes. However, the main challenge is the Big Build (ie, to replace the Scouts HQ). Full report can be seen in Appendix below.

West Mercia Police (PC Jon Hand)

The Parish Chairman read the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team Report which states that the area in which we live has a low crime rate. Over the last year we've had:

Shoplifting – 1 Theft

5 Assault

7 Burglary

4 Public Order

2 Criminal Damage

1 Drug offence

38% of the above incidents relate to the Bank House.

The local policing team have visited the local Cub and Scouts group and also Our Place to engage with the children who showed interest, especially in the Police 4X4. Full report is shown in the Appendix below.

Leigh and District Gardeners Club (Steve Kent)

A report was given by Steve covering the wide variety of talks which were given last year as well as the less well attended but still enjoyable Xmas social! Steve also gave thanks to various members for their dedication over the years. Steve's full report is shown in the Appendix.

Leigh Guides (Valda Cane)

Valda said the Guides packed a lot in to the last year and you can see Valda's report in the Appendix below.

Footpath Warden (Garry Sutton)

Garry explained that his job is to identify and make good any problems on the Parish's extensive rights of way system. These problems may include Way Marking and any obstructions. In terms of remedial work, Garry actions any way marking which needs to be done (white disk and yellow/blue arrows and secateurs to clear overgrowth. Any bigger jobs can be logged on the Parish Warden's Database by the public and will be actioned by Garry if applicable. You can see Garry's Full Report in Appendix below.

Bowls (John Sharp)

John gave a short report, touching on the history of the club and that presently they have 15 members with a range of skills who enjoy the game, the friendship of the group and above who don't take themselves too seriously and do not take part in competitive matches with other clubs. If anyone would like to join, the Bowls club meet on a Monday evening in the Memorial Hall; annual membership is £5 with a fee of £2.50 per session. John's full report is shown in the Appendix.

Malvern Martial Arts and Fitness Centre (Julian Burton)

As with many businesses Julian voiced how tough it's been on his martial arts and fitness centre with gym members and class attendance being much lower. However, he voiced his gratitude for the support from the community and this has enabled more class choice. Full report can be seen in Appendix below.

Leigh Church (Rev Anne Potter)

Alan Soper gave a comprehensive report for Leigh Church on behalf of Rev Anne Potter, first giving thanks to Jean Colley's 25 year service as Warden. He said the church is holding its own, but desperately needs a

decent toilet and running water. Plan for the works will be revealed in due course. Cream teas will be served from end of May in the Churchyard. Alan's full report can be found in Appendix below.

Leigh Brownies (Deb Cook)

The Parish Clerk read the report on behalf of Deb Cook. The Brownie Unit has continued to enjoy the excellent facilities at L&B Memorial Hall. They've seen their Brownie numbers increase and the report touched on the activities and achievements of the Brownies. Full report is shown in the Appendix.

Leigh Rainbows (Leah Heard)

It's been an incredibly busy year for Leigh Rainbows! Leah Heard gave a comprehensive report of all the activities which have taken place over the last year. She also voiced her gratitude for the unwavering support of the Parish. Leigh Rainbows will be 20 years old next September so celebration detail will follow! Leah's Full Report is shown in the Appendix.

St Richard's Hospice Warehouse (Nigel Christie)

Nigel has had the privilege of volunteering with St Richard's Hospice for 12 years. He said when we hear the word hospice, we may feel anxious, but he would describe SRH with six simple words "It is a place of love." Last year they provided care for over 3100 patients with serious progressive illnesses, supporting families and the bereaved across Worcestershire. Nigel's full report can be seen in Appendix below.

Leigh & Bransford United Charities (John Sharp)

John Sharp gave an informative report on the history and function of Leigh and Bransford United Charities; a full report can be found in the Appendix.

6. OPEN FORUM AND DISCUSSION

There was a short discussion after which the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and contributing. The meeting then closed for refreshments.

Signed

Dated

Appendix

Chairman's Report

There have been a lot of changes to the Parish Council this year. As reported at the last meeting we had 3 of our Councillors stand down after many years of service. This coincided with the 4-year re-election cycle of the Council. Unusually, we had 9 applicants for the 8 seats for Leigh and non for the 3 seats at Bransford. This meant that we had to have a rather costly election to select the 8 Councillors. I'm pleased to say that the shortage of Councillors for Bransford led to John Sharp being co-opted as Councillor for Bransford bringing back his many years of experience to the Parish Council.

I would like to thank Graham Jones who has sadly had to step down recently after 40 years on the Parish Council in various roles including Chair – we wish him all the best.

In March our Parish Clerk, Jacqui Barker, who had been with us for over 17 years resigned. I would like to thank her for all the work she did over these years. I would also like to introduce Anna Briggs our new Clerk and wish her all the best.

On a very sad note, in August, we received the news that Pete King had passed away. Many of you will know Pete, who as well as being Vice-Chair of the Parish Council, was actively involved for many years with the Gardeners' Club and headed up our Highways group on the never-ending fight against speeding. Pete spent the last 4 years as Councillor as the Principal Author of our Neighbourhood Plan, which, thanks to him, we are using as a guide for every planning application we consider. With the constant delay of the revision of the SWDP and MHDC lack of a 5-year housing land supply the L&B NP is (to quote Peter Wately our district Councillor) "worth its weight in gold". On behalf of the Parish, I thank Pete for all he did for us.

The Parish Council has considered 37 Planning Applications this year - approved 33 of them and refused 4.

This year the Parish Council has made grants/donations of £3,250 to local organisations.

The Parish Council has approved a budget and precept for the year 2024 to 2025 of £25,000. This is an increase of £1,000. The increase was necessary due to increase in wages and other costs.

Our new Vice-Chair, Nigel Christie, and Marie McNally have set up the Leigh and Bransford Parish Council face-book page where you may have seen many postings over the last few months which are helping the PC connect with the community and keep everyone informed on local issues. We have also approved a re-vamp of the L&B website which should happen over the next couple of months.

I would like to thank Nick Beard for the Christmas tree that we set-up in Jubilee Garden and hope it will continue as a tradition for years to come.

Work has started on the 45 houses at the Christmas tree sight at Lower Interfields. The 52-house site opposite the school has not moved forward I believe due to a lack of a developer to build these houses due to the current housing market. The community land for sports and recreation facilities has similarly not moved forward as at this stage no definitive timescales and costs are available.

Hopefully many of you will be aware of the planned Solar farm which will be partially located in Bransford. The farm will cover approximately 271 acres and generate 49.9MW of electricity. We expect a planning application to be raised in the very near future. A team from the Parish Council is working very closely with the Developers and Newland and Powick Parish Councils to represent the views of our Parishes. Up-to-date information is posted on Face-book and the Website as it becomes available.

We are looking at launching a community bus scheme in conjunction with Community Action and Age UK.

Dave Fereday
Chair, Leigh and Bransford Parish Council
16th April 2024

Memorial Hall

One of the benefits of record keeping and looking back over previous reports is the point of reference they can give as we look forward to identifying our hopes, ambitions (and sometimes fears) for the year(s) ahead.

Last year at this same meeting I described the year that had just ended as our *Year of Transition*. Hard now, perhaps, to believe but by March 2023 we had not only been through over 2 years of social and business upheaval and restrictions due to Covid-19 lockdowns, but also the country, as a whole, was still only slowly getting back to what was being called ‘the new normal’.

But what has been happening since I was here last year? Well, we began the year (that is back in March 2023) with 2 main objectives, both of which, I’m delighted to report were achieved. Our two objectives – which we have since adopted as our annual over-arching objectives going forward:

- To achieve self-supporting financial stability (that is, being able to generate sufficient annual income to cover our running costs without grant aid or dipping into our reserves) and second – which is contingent on our achieving our first objective –
- To achieve a surplus of income over expenditure on running costs to implement an agreed schedule of additional improvements to the hall and its amenities

So, how did we do?

Well, the year began with inflation running at over 10% and it remained stubbornly high for at least the first six months. Our single most expensive overhead, as it was for all of you here this evening, was the cost of energy. Although we had installed over 20 solar panels and a back-up battery storage system, the actual unit price of electricity had increased exponentially for commercial properties – and yes, by the way, although the Hall is a registered charity, we are classified as a commercial business. In the end we paid almost £7,250.00 for electricity over the year, which to put that in context works out at almost £20.00 a day!! Without the solar panels, we would have paid nearer £12,000.00 or almost £33.00 a day. So the investment in solar saved on average £13.00 a day. The even better news is that from this February (when we renegotiated our electricity contract) our unit price for electricity has fallen quite significantly and we’ve locked in the price for three years. We have, at last, some stability on energy costs now, which will allow us to plan ahead for the next 3 years.

The exponential rise in our annual overheads since coming out of covid – up from about £12,000 a year to almost £19,000 (or over 50%) now includes:

- providing free Wi-Fi throughout the building (almost £900 a year)
- an additional £1,000 a year to cut the grass
- increasing the annual cleaning contract hours
- having two skips of commercial waste a fortnight emptied rather than the one
- a contingency for emergency repairs and maintenance – recently we have had water ingress and roofing issues as well as septic tank emptying, drainage, tree pruning and pothole filling on the drive and carparking areas to address

Such increases meant that the trustees have had to take the difficult decision twice in the last 18 months to increase our hourly charges – if we were going to meet our first objective to achieve independent financial sustainability. The challenge has been to keep the hourly hire charges affordable because too steep a rise would potentially mean that fewer people would hire the building, thus negatively impacting our income. But thanks to our wonderful community of hirers and local groups, they not only continued to remain loyal, but

the number of annual hires has very slightly improved over the last year, up from 336 to 340. A total of 340 hires means that we are averaging almost one hire a day throughout the year.

So, a very big thank you to all of our regular groups, training organisations, families, wedding couples and all the other occasional hirers who have supported the Hall over the past 12 months – without you, there simply would be no Hall for everyone to enjoy.

But what of our second objective – to use any surplus funds to improve the Hall and its amenities?

Well, thanks to a grant from the Lottery Community Fund we have completed a schedule of improvements all of which, in different ways have been designed to improve access. ***Here are some of the improvements we put in place over the past 12 months:***

- You may have noticed that in the SMALL HALL we have now fitted acoustic panels to the sloping ceiling which have not only improved the insulation but have also dramatically improved the acoustics. We have a couple of trustees who suffer from hearing loss and they have reported a significant improvement to the acoustics in the Small Hall
- We have also re-hung the double doors that lead into the Large Hall by way of the access ramp, and removed the small step at the top of the ramp. This now gives true step-free access to the Large Hall
- The ramp itself has also had an all-weather safety rail constructed and installed along its entire length.
- The large potholes in the Hall driveway and in certain areas of the parking hardstanding have been professionally filled and resurfaced
- The drainage underneath the access route to the Main Hall Doors has also been serviced and cleared out to prevent pooling water making access to the building difficult after considerable downpours of rain – and
- New, more efficient hand dryers have been installed in all the toilets – these new hand dryers actually dry your hands fairly quickly – the old ones simply seemed to move the water over your hands without actually drying them!!

Most, but not all these pending improvements were trailed at the end of last year's report to this open meeting, and so it is very pleasing this evening to confirm that they have all now been achieved.

In addition, we were fortunate to obtain a 50% grant towards the cost of a new **defibrillator** (now located on the corner of the building that faces the Sherridge Road), and the cost of permanently wiring it in has been met by a contribution from the ***Worcestershire Community Fund, managed in our parish by Councillor Karen Hanks*** – we are most grateful for her support in covering the cost of the installation. The defibrillator is now fully commissioned and illuminated so it can be seen easily both by day and during the night. This adds another important, potentially life-saving piece of equipment adding to the number already installed in various locations around our parish. ***It's since been registered with the Ambulance Service and is now part of the National Defibrillator Network.***

So, what's in store for the year ahead?

Well, at our regular trustee meeting last month, we noted a significant rise in the number of couples who are choosing to get married and hiring the hall for their wedding receptions. As most weddings usually take a long time to plan, there is always going to be a predicted 'lag' in wedding bookings. In the year just ended, the Hall hosted just 3 wedding receptions (which itself was an increase over the previous year), but at the time of presenting this report we already have advance bookings for 10 weddings (7 for the current year and 3 that will take place in 2025).

Our Advance Bookings Spreadsheet also shows that shows that we have over 100 hire reservations already booked for the year ahead, which is broadly comparable with the same time last year. That means we should generate sufficient income to cover our costs and still have some surplus income to invest for making improvements as the year progresses. The trustees have already discussed trying to raise sufficient funds

during the year (perhaps with the help of some grant aid too) to achieve the following improvements and refurbishments:

- Replacing the old thermoplastic tile flooring in the entrance lobby
- Potentially adding acoustic panelling to the Large Hall
- Making some timely refurbishment repairs to the original Porch that leads into the middle of the Small Hall
- Refreshing the slated 'garden' area outside the Large Hall

However, only a few days after writing this brief annual update disaster struck over the Easter weekend. Those of you who hire the hall know that we always ask you to turn off the hot water immersion heater before leaving. The switches to do this are in the kitchen and have a neon pilot lamp above them – so it's easy to check whether they are on or off.

We ask for them to be turned off, not just to conserve electricity but to prevent the possibility of the thermostat failing, which would mean that the water in the tank just gets hotter and hotter and eventually overflows. This actually happened not that many months ago resulting in a flood and extensive water damage to the ceilings in the toilets and lobby.

We thought we'd fixed the problem after repairing the immersion heater, replacing some of the water damaged ceilings and then redecorating. We also made sure there was a 'failsafe' second thermostat in place. But sadly, despite our best efforts, when our cleaner arrived a few days after the Easter holiday (during which time the hall had not been used for a few days) she was greeted by a flood and lots more water damage to the recently repaired ceilings.

It now seems that both thermostats had failed and the immersion heater itself is damaged beyond repair. The roof space floor was soaked through and the newly decorated ceilings were once again water damaged. As our insurance covers only the water damage and not the cost of replacing the failed immersion heater (fair wear and tear they call it!!) we are now having to replace the hot water system from our reserves. This has the knock-on effect of putting our ambitions to further improve the amenities of the building and site on hold, until we see how much surplus income we may have left towards the end of the year. Hopefully we'll be able to achieve some of our plans – come back next year and we'll let you know.

To close, the trustees would like to thank not only the Parish Council for its continued support but also those of you here tonight who also use the hall – whether on an occasional basis or as a regular group member. Without you, the hall could not survive, and we would be in danger of losing our valuable community resource.

See you next year!

Jon Gamble

Chair of Trustees

WI

Leigh and Bransford W.I. have had a busy year which has been arranged and well supported by the hard working committee. The membership has increased a little as we have welcomed some new members. There have been speakers on a variety of subjects from the reason why some people irritate us and understanding them to a talk about a project monitoring the water in the River Theme linked to the national W.I. campaign in support of clean rivers. Most recently we had a talk from the chairman of this Parish Council about the work of the Parish Council which provided a lot of questions mainly about the developments in the village and the Parish Plan. At the Christmas party we again had a collection of new toys that we took to the Salvation Army to support their project to give toys to children in Malvern. We had craft evenings and a more energetic time when we tried indoor curling and Smite a type of skittles. There are 2

sub-groups a book club and embroidery group. Leigh and Bransford W.I. is part of the Worcestershire and National W.I. Federation and support the national campaigns this year it is calling on the Government to improve the N.H.,S. dental service. There are opportunities for members to attend lectures on line or in person or to do courses covering a wide range of activities. We are a very friendly group and would welcome anyone to come along to our meetings to see what we do. The next meeting is a demonstration by Old Meg Morris Dancers we welcome to come and give it a try.

Scouts

Dale said the Scouts are in a really good position with the highlight being that they've formed two new sections: Squirrels (4-6 year olds) and have re-started Pioneer Explorers. Squirrels have 14 members and Pioneers have 10. All sections are running at capacity with approx 130 members across the board. There are waiting lists so at the present time they're only taking applications from the local Parishes.

The Scout group have attended several events throughout the year – one being the Shire Jam Camp, taking 60 members there out of 4,000 attendees (Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire). They also attended camps, swimming events, galas and have continued their support for the Alfrick Show. Behind the scenes several leaders have picked up awards and permits for pistol shooting, tomahawks, crossbows and axe throwing.

What's next for 1st Leigh. The main challenge is the Big Build (ie to replace the HQ). It's about 80/90 years old and is not in great shape. Approx £300,000 needs to be raised. However, by various grants, donations and sponsorship the Trustees hope this will be achieved. As Trustees they have a duty of care to keep the scout group running for the next 50 years and will work tirelessly to ensure the funding is raised.

Dale expressed his thanks to fellow leaders, the Parish Council and to L&B Memorial Hall for their support.

A discussion took place concerning Section 106 and whether it had been 'ringfenced'. Dale informed the group the business plan is in place for the 'Big Build' so he can start approaching potential backers. Mark Hammond confirmed that all Section 106 money in the parish is ringfenced for other projects. The only way any 106 money can be released to another project is if there's a specific clause written into the contract with the Developer. This discussion to be continued.

Report from Police Safer Neighbourhood Team – April 2024

Leigh & Bransford annual report . This report covers incidents on the area between the 16th April 2023 and 25th March 2024.

Shoplifting – 1 Theft –

5 Assault –

7 Burglary –

4 Public Order –

2 Criminal Damage –

1 Drugs offences – 1

To summarise the above –

- 38% of the above incidents relate to The Bank House Hotel (1 public order, 4 assaults, 2 thefts and 1 drugs offence).
- The burglary incidents relate to one of a private dwelling and three were business properties. As you can see from the above, the parish remains a very low crime area. Regardless of this, mobile patrols are conducted on an almost daily basis in the area to act as a high visibility deterrent to criminals and to provide reassurance for the community. Occasional speed enforcement has been done as and when resources allow. Over the last year the local policing team has visited the local Cub Scouts group and gave a talk on what we do and the law around knives which was requested by the leader. This was a great opportunity to engage with local youths and was well received. We have also recently visited Our Place and have spoken to the children and staff. The children got to look around our 4X4 and asked lots of interesting questions.

Regards. PC 2483 Jon Hand Kempsey & Alfrick SNT

Leigh and District Gardeners Club

We had a wide variety of talks over the last year starting with 'Using your Greenhouse' to good effect and 'A trip through some Beautiful Cornish Gardens'.

Following on from March and April we started our summer visits programme with a fascinating visit to Brobury House and then to Bourton House and Gardens. In July we ventured to the Gardens at Miserden and August saw us visit Overbury Gardens which for many was the highlight of the summer programme and the only one I could not attend due to grandparent duties!

Our autumn and winter season talks started with Joff Elphick's interesting 'Crayfish on the Lawn and Other Gardening Stories' followed by an enlightening talk on 'Geraniums'. Pip Smith gave a knowledgeable talk entitled 'Totally Tulips' and last month saw Harriet Rycroft (who had appeared on Gardeners' World in 2023) give what many thought the best talk of the year so far on 'Potty Time' (A Year in Pots)!

Our Christmas social was perhaps less well attended than hoped (which meant more mulled wine for those that did!) but it was a grim night and rather too near Christmas for some. A testing gardening/local quiz saw heads scratched and pencils sucked whilst a delightful buffet, provided by members, was consumed.

On a very sad note 2023 saw our long standing Treasurer and my right hand man Pete King pass away. Not only was he a stalwart member of the club and a trusted Treasurer, he was mine and many people's friend. He is sadly missed. We also miss June (one of our valued committee members) and Steve Seymour (our barman) who eventually moved away in December. They are settling in well.

On a positive note, and without too much persuasion, Mark White has volunteered to take on the role of Treasurer...much to my relief. Thank you Mark. A special thanks go to the committee (especially Sue Benjamin who now supplies the refreshments and to Garnet Freeman for organising the summer visits) for their support and advice throughout the year and to those members that volunteer to serve the teas/coffees etc.. Also, a big thank you goes to Helen Cook for running the raffle and to George for agreeing to run the bar...both of which contribute to club funds. The club also records its thanks to the Alfrick and Lulsley Show Committee for their grant this year.

Leigh Guides

Valda said that Leigh Guides were invited last April to join the Scouts at their St George's Day Parade which they really enjoyed. The Guides enjoyed a skills day at The Hut – the Guides and their leaders worked through knife safety. They then set about whittling a tent peg and whilst they tried with a carrot (it didn't really work)! Thank you to Matt and Kai for providing knives and wood and to Kevin who was there to supervise. The Guides then set about cooking a 'Pot luck' evening meal with ingredients given to them. A lot of work was undertaken last summer on badge work and team building games, camp fires and walks around the fields. In July their summer camp was a success as this was situated next door to the Safari Park. The rain came down and never stopped. She said the girls never complained once about the rain; they just got on with it (Valda's tent was the last to go up)! No leaks in the tent (apart from Kevin's)! Lots of activities were enjoyed. Thank you to Charlie, Millie and Kevin for all their hard work. And to Wendy who came out every day (her little boy had Croup). The sun shone on their visit to the Safari Park and the drivers were very good at going off track to the Guides could see the animals much closer. The last day they went on the waterslide which they had all been waiting for; thankfully the sun shone. More thanks to John and June Hammond for transporting all the equipment in the Horse Box.

Other news – three new Guides were welcomed and at Alfrick Show the Guides helped on the toy stall as well as the tombola at Leigh Church fete.

With Christmas on the horizon, thoughts turned to decorating the Christmas tree at Leigh Church. Several weeks went into making and painting decorations. On December 8th the tree went up and it was also decorated (some of the Guides were playing hide and seek in the church). The week before Christmas they held their Christmas Camp Fire with parents joining them for refreshments, including hot chocolate. A thank you to Alfrick Show Committee for the money to hire the hall for a weekend which still needs to be organised, to Councillor Hanks for helping with the cost of the Safari Park and Cllr Rouse for the help she gives every year. Valda ended with asking if anyone would be willing to help run the Guides; she would be very grateful.

Footpath Warden

Garry explained that his job is to identify and make good any problems on the Parish's extensive rights of way system. These problems may include Way Marking and any obstructions. In terms of remedial work, Garry actions any way marking which needs to be done (white disk and yellow/blue arrows and secateurs to clear overgrowth. Any bigger jobs can be logged on the Parish Warden's Database by the public and will be actioned by Garry if applicable. What he and (mostly) the Parish Council have achieved over the last 4 to 5 years is replacing many stiles with gates. Garry spoke of footpaths being blocked for many years; even though he and his team have cleared some, it's still an ongoing problem. He referred to the potential Solar Panel build and on attendance at one of their meetings was impressed with what was said about footpaths in that area, with footpaths being 10 metres wide and the general infrastructure on the plans. Thanks was given to Garry by representatives for keeping the paths open for all to enjoy.

Bowls

Leigh and Branford Indoor Bowls Club was formed many years ago by the late and greatly missed Cath Hall. It meets at the Memorial Hall on a Monday evening at 7:30, from September through to the following May. We have two short mats which are laid on the large hall floor and use traditional bowling woods. We currently have 15 members with a range of skills who enjoy the game and the friendship of the group. It is important to note that we do not take ourselves too seriously and we do not take part in competitive matches with other clubs.

We welcome new members and if anyone in the area would like to try the game, they will be welcome to come to the Memorial Hall on a Monday evening in the season. If they would like to join the annual membership is £5 and a fee of £2.50 is paid by each person when they attend for an evening's play.

Malvern Martial Arts

As with many businesses Julian Burton voiced how tough it's been on his martial arts and fitness centre with gym members and class attendance being much lower. However he voiced his gratitude for the support from the community and this has enabled more class choice. Ladies only kick boxing run by a local female instructor who has an exceptional fight record and is a well known fitness coach. Julian also said that both male and female children and adults are attending shows, and Taekwondo is attracting a younger audience. He's also working with local schools (L&B, Dysons, Chase, MSJ) using the MMAA Banner.

He touched on both children and adults with additional needs benefitting from his classes, along with social services funded children. In addition to boxing/kickboxing, the club offers pole dancing, circuits, pilates, grappling/wrestling, ladies self defence.

In summary it could be busier, but the club supports itself with the help from the Parish Council and the local community.

Leigh Church

Alan Soper spoke as representative for Leigh Church and he first gave thanks to Jean Colley, who for 25 years has been Warden at Leigh Church. He said they're holding their own, with various activities taking place throughout the year; not least with their cream teas which will be available from the 26th May in the churchyard. The church needs to address the fact that they have no decent toilet, nor are they connected to main water. A team has therefore been formed to build a kitchen and disabled toilet and during the Church fete in June, plans etc will be revealed. Much of the money needed will hopefully be by way of grant money.

Visiting choirs have become more common so Leigh Church is becoming quite a focus for music and singing. Like every business it can be quite tough, but Alan said there's good life and support for the Church. A thank you to the Scout group for helping to keep the church yard tidy and also a thank you to The Parish Council for its continued financial support. The roof of Bransford Chapel has recently been replaced; this was partly funded by the Burton Legacy. Lastly a Thank You to Nick Beard for supplying the Christmas Tree and to Leigh Rainbows for decorating it.

Leigh Brownies

1st Leigh Brownies

This year our Brownie Unit has continued to enjoy the excellent facilities at Leigh and Bransford Memorial Hall. We have seen numbers increase with many new girls joining us and making their Brownie promise. We have all also had a number of Brownies achieve their bronze, silver or gold awards-the highest awards possible as a Brownie. Some girls have chosen individually to work on badges with titles as varied as 'Grow your own', 'Languages', 'Aviation', 'Performing' and understanding 'My Rights' and as a unit they have learned skills and achieved awards from different areas of our Brownie programme including camping, staying healthy and using simple tools. Particular highlights have included a swimming pool party with another Brownie unit, a countryside walk at dusk, receiving a thank you card from our late queen in response to the platinum jubilee cards they made and sent, a trip to see the pantomime, creating collaborative art to enter at Alfrick show, wreath making at Christmas time, a camp fire, outdoor water races, and baking. Most exciting of all was a Brownie sleepover with all kinds of animal themed games and crafts and a visit from a range of creatures brought by Animal Mania.

We have more potential Brownies looking to join us when they move on from Rainbows and lots of plans for more adventures activities during the coming year.

Leigh Rainbows

Allow me to introduce myself — I am Leah, and I have been actively involved with 1st Leigh Rainbows since my daughter joined approximately 10 years ago. Many of you are likely familiar with Ann, who has dedicated nearly 20 years to leading this group. However, Ann has decided to step down and retire, entrusting the unit's leadership to me.

I am lucky to have a great team around me as I embark on this journey, we have Tegen, a unit helper and a qualified Brownie leader who has been with us since 2021. Tegen is currently working toward completing her Rainbow module to become a fully qualified leader within our ranks. We also have a Guide Rainbow Helper, Miah, who has been with us since the end of 2020 and is due to finish Guides in September when she turns 14 and wishes to complete her Young Leadership scheme with us whilst continuing with Valda and Charley as a Ranger, which is very exciting.

Over the past year, our group has experienced significant activity. We currently have 13 girls enrolled, with a small handful on the waiting list. Just last week, we welcomed a new Rainbow to our fold. Last summer we bid farewell to 7 Rainbows who transitioned to Brownies whilst at the same time welcoming 7 new Rainbows.

You may have come across our posts on the Leigh Sinton Facebook group or in other local channels such as the Sphere Magazine. Going forward, we plan to make these updates a regular feature, aiming to raise awareness within our village and the surrounding areas.

Notably, our Rainbows now represent a diverse mix of schools. While Leigh and Bransford School remain part of our community, we are delighted to include girls from neighbouring villages and Malvern too. This cross-school interaction is invaluable, especially considering the challenges posed by COVID-19 restrictions during their early years.

We have a diverse age range within our group, spanning from 4 to 7 years old. Additionally, we have two Rainbows who will be transitioning to Brownies at the end of the summer term, with their start in Brownies scheduled for September. Our goal is to raise awareness and welcome new Rainbows during the Autumn Term.

Ann's absence has left us with a vacancy in our leadership team. However, I am pleased to share that we have a dedicated parent who has expressed interest in becoming a unit helper, and perhaps even a future leader. Her commitment is a valuable asset to our group, and we look forward to helping her on her journey in Girlguiding and potentially taking this further to her leadership qualification in the near future.

Over the last 12 months, our Rainbows have diligently worked on their badge requirements, resulting in over **150 program badges** earned. Additionally, we have awarded **110 other badges** for participation in events, challenge activities, and trips. It's heartening to see their enthusiasm and effort as they earn these accolades.

I am proud to announce that we have had **9 girls achieve their bronze award, 7 achieve their silver award, and 5 achieve their gold award, the most prestigious award within the Rainbows section.** These significant honours are a testament to their hard work, both at home and during our unit meetings these last 12 months.

Over the last year, we have organized various events, including county and district activity days. These gatherings provide opportunities for our Rainbows to collaborate with other units, as well as older girls from Brownies, Guides, and Rangers. Together, they engage in enriching activities, collaborate and importantly, have lots of fun.

Here's a recap of some of the memorable trips these last 12 months:

2023:

- **Conkers:** We spent a delightful day at the outdoor adventure and discovery centre with hundreds of other Rainbows from within Worcestershire last summer.
- **The Buzz in Worcester:** An indoor inflatable assault course where some of our girls faced their fears and all had an exhilarating time.
- **Cadbury World:** The magical Christmas visit was thoroughly enjoyed with lots of chocolate for all. Your generous contribution toward coach hire was greatly appreciated and helped offset costs for parents with the majority of the unit in attendance for this enjoyable and memorable event that they still often talk about.

2024:

- **Malvern Fire Station:** Our visit included a tour of the fire engine, hands-on experience with the water hose used by firefighters, uniform try-ons, and an opportunity to ask many questions.
- **Morrison's in Malvern:** We explored the supermarket, learning about their efforts to reduce plastic usage and enhance recycling practices.
- **Malvern Foodbank:** Our ongoing support has made a significant impact. In our latest effort, we collected 51 kg of food and involved the surrounding villages to help us achieve this large donation.
- **Pets as Therapy Visit:** Clive and his dog Monty shared insights into their valuable work. The girls were fascinated by this encounter.

Additionally, we've enjoyed cinematic outings, watching "The Little Mermaid" and "Wish" during the GirlGuiding cinema takeover weekend.

Your unwavering support over the years has allowed us to nurture the girls' confidence, provide unique experiences, foster connections beyond their immediate social circles, and empower them to reach their full potential. We thank you very much for your kind support, both this last 12 months and in previous years.

As we look ahead, we're exploring ways to further engage the local community and enhance our fundraising efforts. Next September is our 20th birthday and we would very much like to celebrate this, how, we have not yet decided, but we will most certainly announce what we decide to do nearer the event. Thank you for being an integral part of our journey!

St Richard's Warehouse

To achieve that the organisation turns over £10m per year and a very significant part of that income comes from the sale of donations through the 18 shops and online sales. The hub of that work is in our Parish, the

SRH warehouse at Crowcroft. The warehouse was opened in 2007, has 17 staff and over 70 volunteers and to put that operation in context, Nigel shared a few figures.

Over the last month the quantity of sales of books was over 11k items, ladies clothing 10k items, bric a brac 8k items and over toys 7k - the list is huge and last month turned over approx £250,000.

Without that support through the warehouse, the shops and online sales SRH could not provide the vital care that so many receive at a critical time of their lives. So a big thank you for all the support given.

Just to finally note the warehouse is open five days a week to receive donations and if you or anyone you know has some spare time and would like to be involved in supporting SRH just go on their website, there are lots of volunteering opportunities at the warehouse and the shops.

Leigh and Bransford United Charities

The Leigh and Bransford United Charities are funded by a range of bequeaths made many years ago by residents of Bransford and the ancient parish of Leigh. The ancient parish of Leigh stretched out to include Malvern Link and beyond. The Charity funds are drawn from interest bearing investments and the rent from 22 acres of farm land. The funds are to be used for the benefit of the poor of the two parishes.

The Charity is managed by eight Trustees who are drawn from our two parishes and from the Malvern Link area.

Although the capital value of the investments has dropped over the past 12 months the income from all sources remained the same. This allowed the Trustees to provide an increased grants to 18 residents of Bransford and the ancient Leigh Parish. In addition, the Charity has again provided a substantial grant to the Headmaster of Leigh and Bransford Primary School to be used to support appropriate children in the school.
John Sharp, Trustee

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