Chair: Cllr Mark Thorn

Clerk: Lisa Harris

Leighton & Eaton Constantine
PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD 15 SEPTEMBER 2026

EATON CONSTANTINE VILLAGE HALL

Present: Councillors M Thorn (Chair), A Bain, S Jones, W Vernon and Shropshire Councillor S Coleman

Clerk: Lisa Harris

No members of the public were present

36.26 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor S Dawes.

37.26 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

a) No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

b) There were no applications for a dispensation regarding disclosable pecuniary interests

38.26 Public Participation Session - *a period of 20 minutes will be set aside for the public to speak, with a strict 3-minute limit per speaker. Members of the public may speak on matters appearing on the agenda. However, if a matter does not appear on the agenda, a written request should be submitted to the Clerk no later than 2 working days before the meeting.*

No members of the public were present.

39.26 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 21 July 2026

The minutes of the previous meetings had been circulated.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Vernon and

resolved (without opposition)

that the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 21 July 2026 be accepted as a true record.

The minutes were signed accordingly.

40.26 Clerk's report on matters arising since the Parish Council Meeting on 21 July 2026

- Having received a query regarding the status of the application to have the footpath by Eaton Constantine Village Hall put on the Definitive Map, it had been confirmed that the Rights of Way Mapping Officer previously dealing with the case had left Shropshire Council. Chased with a contact in Outdoor Partnerships Service and was advised of the following: "This application was being investigated by Stephen Rodenhurst before he left the Council at the end of May 2026. His post is currently vacant leaving me as the sole ROW (Mapping) Officer (0.6 FTE) until we

recruit. This application is one of several applications that we have awaiting determination, i.e. ones that we have been directed to determine by an Inspector following applicant representations to PINS [Planning Inspectorate National Secretary]. These PINS Appeal cases are my current focus and are receiving greater priority. Since Steve's departure, this application has had to be placed on hold, as I already have my own scheduled case load to investigate. However, it is one of our longest outstanding PINS Appeal cases and will be next in line for completion of the investigation stage. I believe that Steve had done a lot of the groundwork, so when I am able to give it my attention I won't be having to start from the beginning."

- Reported the regularly overflowing bin at Leighton's River Severn Meanders on FixMyStreet and also spoke to the relevant department at Shropshire Council. Assured that the collection schedule would be amended to empty the bin more frequently.
- Reported in the "Overgrown Trees/Hedges" category on FixMyStreet, the stretch of footpath on the B4380 between Kynnersley Lane and Home Farm (left hand side when heading in Buildwas direction) which is unsafe for use by the public due to severe overgrowth. Shropshire Council changed the category to "Grass cutting problem" and have updated the status to "Action scheduled". Will add an update to the FixMyStreet report stating that the originally assigned category is indeed correct and that the hedges need cutting.
- Requested data from Highways for the six VAS within the Parish (Leighton, Lower Longwood and Eaton Constantine). Not received as yet but the appropriate department at Shropshire Council is very short-staffed and the situation has been compounded by annual leave having been taken over the summer months. Will continue to chase.
- Received a request from Peter Richards & Co, Chartered Surveyors, on behalf of a client seeking consent for a single plot exemption to build an affordable dwelling on a piece of land owned within the Parish. Shropshire Council's Housing Enabling Team requires the relevant parish council to validate an applicant's local connections against a specific list of nine criteria. At least two of the nine criteria need to be satisfied. Unfortunately, none of the information provided relates to the Parish of Leighton & Eaton Constantine. Spoke with the Housing Enabling and Development Officer at Shropshire Council who confirmed that based on the information supplied, unfortunately Leighton & Eaton Constantine Parish Council could not validate a local connection to the Parish by the applicant.

41.26 To receive report from Shropshire Councillor

Councillor Susan Coleman had nothing specific to report regarding the Parish and had submitted an update on matters affecting the Severn Valley in general for the forthcoming issue of Under the Wrekin.

However, she advised that Shropshire Council continues to be "financially challenged". Last month The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) published an External Assurance Review of Shropshire Council following the declaration of a financial emergency in September 2025. The report outlines recommendations to fix the council's financial crisis and include: Selling the Shirehall as soon as possible and finding other assets to sell; making a clear financial recovery plan; fixing financial processes, budgeting, and risk tracking; and improving leadership, culture, and service reform.

Consequently, Shropshire Council is now selling off assets wherever possible, such as Whitchurch Town Hall, to raise funds. Also looking at closing down Cornovii Homes to save money. Expect more cuts to non-statutory services.

42.26 To receive any relevant updates from parish councillors

- Councillor Jones:
    - Represented the Parish Council at the AGM of Eaton Constantine Village Hall in June. With the lease on the hall expiring in March 2029 options are being considered. One being whether St Mary's could be dual-purposed and used as a community hub. An update on this was recently provided in "Happenings on the Hill" and will appear in the next edition of Under The Wrekin:

      "St Mary's Church – The New Community Hub?

      Geoff Dawes has been writing in UTW for many years about the Eaton Constantine Village Hall lease expiry in March 2029. A helpful 'options' explanation article was published in the last edition of the magazine and a summary leaflet was delivered to all household in Eaton Constantine and the surrounding villages prior to the Village Hall AGM on 8 June 2026. It was a most enjoyable community occasion, although the subject matter was somewhat saddening. The Eaton Constantine Parochial Church Council (PCC) has since then consolidated its investigation into whether or not St Mary's could become the Community Hub if the Village Hall facilities were no longer available for use. A folder containing findings is available in the church for anyone interested in reading more.

      To become a Community Hub, what would it need? The Church would need water to be installed, toilet facilities and a servery (mini kitchen). Anything else?

      What has the PCC already done? We have sought advice from the Diocese about our initial thoughts. We learnt that we would need to use Conservation Artisans as we are a listed building, including most probably an archeologist, and overcome objections from The Victorian Society about disrupting historically significant examples of early Victorian 'closed pews'. This would not be cheap. There are strict rules governing changes to listed Church of England buildings and those who can be employed to make them!

      We then employed an approved architect, who produced a technical options paper for internal alterations, citing excellent customer references from their installation at Church Aston. The PCC determined that St Mary's Church space did not lend itself quite so well to these solutions (it being smaller) and we decided not to pursue.

      What is the PCC doing now? The PCC has approved the commissioning of a feasibility study by a Conservation Architect to look at additional technical options. We are awaiting Diocesen approval to proceed.

      Please do let us know your thoughts, Sue sdawesecpccsec@gmail.com "

      Since the Eaton Constantine Village Hall AGM, Councillor Jones has received an update from Mr Geoff Dawes. He advised that the Committee is in discussions with the landowner and has requested that it is not held responsible for removing the building from the site at the end of the lease.

    - Will be attending the next meeting of the Ironbridge Power Station Liaison Group later this week. Has stepped down as secretary but will continue to

represent Leighton & Eaton Constantine Parish Council at meetings until she retires as a councillor in May 2027.

- In the absence of any local input, has asked Tim Coleshaw to attend a parish council meeting in 2027. Tim is now retired but was previously National Nature Reserve Co-ordinator for Natural England and as a local ecologist will be able to provide advice and guidance on environmental protection and sustainability.

- Councillor Bain:
  - Asked if there was any update on the installation of traffic calming signs in Garmston. The Clerk responded that Shropshire Council had been chased and had advised that although the works were on a list to be done, they were yet to be programmed.
- Councillor Vernon:
  - Reported that the VAS in Eaton Constantine, when approaching from the Upper Longwood direction, is very dim and the display cannot be seen in daylight. Only visible when it is dark at night.

    ACTION: Clerk to report via FixMyStreet and also to ask Shropshire Council what ongoing maintenance checks are carried out on the equipment.
  - Queried whether cycling clubs could be contacted to ask if they could put up their signage in advance of an event as the lack of notice is causing local difficulties. Councillors Thorn and Jones advised that this matter had been raised previously and unfortunately there is no requirement for organisers to apply for road closures or even to advise the police of such events. Through his role with Leighton Village Hall, Councillor Thorn does have some limited contact with the cycling organisation and would attempt to liaise with them to improve the situation.
- Councillor Thorn:
  - Had been sent a copy of a serious and concerning complaint from a parishioner, regarding bus service 96. The complaint had originally been submitted to the bus operator - Select Bus Services.

    ACTION: Councillor Thorn to forward the email to Shropshire Councillor Coleman who would take this matter up with the portfolio holder for Transport & Regeneration, Councillor Rob Wilson.

43.26 Current financial matters

a) Payments

Payee	**Description**	**Amount**
HMRC	PAYE on Clerk's salary August/September	£ 173.56
Miss L Harris	Clerk's net salary August/September	£ 682.70
Miss L Harris	Clerk's expenses August/September	£ 50.00
	TOTAL	**£ 901.26**

It was proposed by Councillor Thorn and seconded by Councillor Jones and

resolved (without opposition)

that the above accounts be approved for payment.

b) Bank reconciliation to 6 September 2026

The bank was reconciled at £27,076.68, being the online banking balance. The bank reconciliation was agreed and signed accordingly.

44.26 Planning

1. Decisions to note

None

2. Planning applications for consideration:

a. Ref: 26/03047/FUL

Address: Stone Cottages Garmston Eaton Constantine Shropshire

Description: Erection of extension to dwelling (demolition of single-storey extension and rear conservatory)

Validated: 20 Aug 2026

Status: Pending Consideration

Application can be viewed on Shropshire Council's Planning Portal, or by clicking here

It was agreed that a comment of support would be submitted regarding 26/03047/FUL. However, it would include a note that while the Parish Council appreciated that many of the reasons for the refusal of an earlier proposal (26/00695/FUL) had now been addressed, it was felt that this application could be further improved if the material finish was more consistent with that of the adjoining property.

ACTION: Clerk to make appropriate submission on Shropshire Council's Planning Portal.

45.26 Future agenda items

None.

46.26 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 17 November 2026 at 7.00pm – Leighton Village Hall

Tuesday 19 January 2027 at 7.00pm – Leighton Village Hall

The Chair thanked everybody for attending and the meeting closed at 8.22pm.

Signed by Chair: ..... Date: 17 November 2026