

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 14 February 2023 in Levens Methodist Church at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. R. Atfield (Chairman), S. Bagot, J. Battye (and as Shadow Councillor Westmorland & Furness Council [W&FC]), H. Burrow, K. Holmes (and as SLDC District Cllr.), R. Mason, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy.

In Attendance: W&FC Councillor S. Bavin; M. R. Curry (Clerk) and 2 members of the public.

105/22 Apologies for Absence: County Councillor J. Bland.

106/22 Declarations of interest: Cllrs Battye, Holmes and Atfield declared interests in any matters relating to the Playing Fields.

107/22 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 10 January 2023 as a true record.

108/22 Public Participation:

- a) Concern was raised about trees on Lowgate and Underhill which were beginning to affect TV signals and some which were now in proximity to electricity cables. The concerns raised by other Parishioners on Lowgate and at Cotes were also mentioned. Cllr Mason will continue to try to get hold of a local contractor to address these issues. It was **Agreed** that the Clerk should contact Electricity North West regarding trees near electric cables.
- b) In response to a parishioner's observation, it was noted that temporary road signs remained in place at Underhill after roadworks had been completed. Also, that further road works were required to address the uneven surface in the vicinity. It was agreed to pass these observations on to Cllr. Bland, though it was noted that he is aware of the road surface issue.
- c) Mr J. Morris offered to repeat the clearance of the footpath at Underhill and also to do some strimming at the Brigsteer Road site. These offers were accepted with thanks.
- d) Mrs S. Watson referred to previous discussion on the cost of street lighting and proposed that the Parish Council should consider turning off the lights and encourage pedestrians to wear high-visibility vests and carry a torch. This would save cost and be a contribution to environmental sustainability. It was noted that the Clerk is intending to write to the new W&FC to raise the question of lighting costs and that this matter remains work in progress.

109/22 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- i. Cllr Battye reported on a recent successful fundraising event held by the Playing Fields Committee. It is planning its annual Marquee Dance and is continuing with plans to upgrade the MUGA. Cllr. Holmes reported that the Playing Fields Trustees were continuing with a review of governance and their role.
 - ii. Cllrs. Atfield and Rogerson reported on a Teams meeting hosted by CALC on the implications for Parish Councils of the change to unitary authorities in Cumbria. It had been of limited value and not helped by the poor performance of Teams technology which had impeded the continuity of the meeting, but it appeared that most of our concerns were raised at some point.
- b) Police:** No report had been received from the Police. However, Cllr Burrow had spoken to PCSO Park about a recent collision at the foot of Whitegate Hill between a cyclist travelling at speed as part of a group from a local club and a pedestrian. Both parties had required hospital treatment. This had confirmed concerns that groups of cyclists from Clubs regularly travelled through the village at speeds that were potentially unsafe. Cllr. Burrow had encouraged the injured resident to report the incident to the police, which she had done. It was **Agreed** that the Parish Council should write to local clubs to express its concerns about the speed at which cyclists travel through the village and to include details of this recent incident on the village Facebook site. It was also **Agreed** to explore the possibility of "Cyclists Slow Down" signs from Sustrans.
- c) District Councillor:** Cllr. Holmes reported that he was attending his final meetings of Parish Councils before the transition to the new W&FC and concluding his work as Chair of the Lake

(Windermere) Administrative Committee. Otherwise, he reported that SLDC was focused on the transition process to the new W&FC but continues with business as usual.

- d) **Shadow Councillor, W&FC:** Cllr Battye reported that progress towards a confirming a balanced budget for 2023-24 continues and that the new Council was gearing up for the transition in many other respects. The main administrative centre for the new authority will be in Kendal with key hubs in several other locations including Barrow and Penrith.
- e) **County Councillor:** In the absence of Cllr Bland there was no update from the County Council.

110/22 Finance

- a) **Receipts 01 January – 31 January 2023:** Cllrs noted the following receipt:
27/01/23: Allotment Rent 2022-23: 17.50
- b) **Payments Required:** The following payments were approved:
 - i) M R Curry – Salary: January 2023: (PC: £367.20; Project £151.05; Charity £18.36; Mileage £27.00): 563.61
 - ii) Pandora Technologies: Repairs to SID: 150.00
 - iii) Barry Sykes (Curlew Recovery Project) via CCC Project Fund 1,000.00
 - iv) Levens Parish Council Book Transfer: Grant from CCC new noticeboard: 1,000.00
 - v) T Hecht: The equivalent of \$45 email hosting fee when due: approx: 38.00
- c) **Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** Councillors noted the gross reconciled bank balance of £17,831.74 (net £17,771.74 after unrepresented cheques) held by the Parish Council at 31 January 2023. They also noted a statement of ring-fenced funds showing a balance of £2,563.77 due to Cumbria County Council leaving a net balance of PC funds of £15,207.97 (of which there were ring fences in favour of woodland management of £2,500.00 and for the Christmas event of £1,016.52).
- d) **2023-24 Precept:** The Clerk confirmed that a precept bid for £14,421.00 (in line with the approved budget) had been submitted to SLDC and that SLDC had confirmed receipt.
- e) **Parish Council ICT Requirements:** The Clerk confirmed that the new ICT package was due to be installed later in February. It was Agreed that he would prepare and circulate a formal note recording the shared arrangements and implications for the future.
- f) **Management of PC Finances** (banking arrangements): The Chairman has had further correspondence with Lloyds, but this remains work in progress.

111/22 Levens Community Project

- a) **Levens Community Project Advisory Group (PAG):** Cllr Mason presented a brief report from a meeting held on 07 February. Main items of report were:
 - i. **Sale of Plots:** An offer of £150,000 has been received for Plot 1 at Cotes and Armitstead Barnett have been instructed to seek a higher sum more in line with the receipts from adjacent plots. Following the conclusion of negotiations with a previous prospective purchaser, Plot 3 at Church Hill is now the subject of a new offer from another party which is being considered in liaison with Armitstead Barnett.
 - ii. **Works: Underhill and the New Village Hall:** Current ground works at Underhill have been completed, but further infrastructure work such as the running of services to site remains to be done in due course. Work on the perimeter walls at the new Village Hall site continues and is looking very good.
 - iii. **Electricity Supply at the New Village Hall:** Following a letter to the Vicar requesting his support in an approach to the Diocese for approval to duct routes for services under the Church grounds, a site-meeting had been held with Hal Bagot as Church Warden. He had suggested that the Project might be better served by the route going down the line of the footpath on the north side of the site, but this is not favoured for several reasons. Cllr. S. Bagot explained that if the Church remains the preferred option, the Church authorities will require professional advice from a surveyor. It was **Agreed** that the Clerk should write to Hal Bagot to confirm this preference and acknowledge Church requirements for professional advice for which the Project will need to pay. The Project will ask to be advised of the potential costs for this work before an engagement is confirmed. A recent meeting with an electrical consultant confirmed that a 100amp, 3-phase supply will be sufficient.
 - iv. **Tender Packs:** These remain on hold pending confirmation of utility requirements.

- v. **Community Housing Fund:** Cllr Mason reported that following an approach to SLDC (administering the Community Housing Fund) an increase in Infrastructure Grant for work at the Institute has been provisionally agreed in the sum of £46,000, subject to an amendment to the Funding Agreement).
- vi. **The Supply of Accountancy Services:** The Clerk reported that Armstrong Watson have now confirmed that the engagement process is complete and will proceed with submitting the VAT Return for Quarter 3 as requested some weeks ago.

b) Payments: To Ratify payments as recommended by PAG:

Following recommendation from the Project Advisory Group the following payment was approved:

SLDC – Building Regulation Inspection Charges, Plot 3 Church Road: 600.00

112/22 Planning Applications:

- a) **The Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule at 14 February had been circulated and were noted. Applications noted or attracting comment were:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Status
8	SL/2022/0938	Plot 2 Church Road	Variation of approved plans	Not yet determined
14	SL/2022/0768	5-6 The Stables, Levens Hall	New interior glass door – no objection submitted	Not yet determined
18	SL/2022/0950	Bridge End Garage	Major alterations – no objection submitted	Not yet determined
19	SL/2022/0995	Whinthwaite Hose	Building works – no objection submitted	Not yet determined
21	SL/2022/1025	Levens Hall	Conversion workshop to bakery – no objection submitted	ACON 25/01/2023
22	SL/2022/1075	Levens Hall	Repairs to west elevation – no objection submitted	Not yet determined
23	SL/2022/1084	9 Greengate, Levens	Side, front & rear extensions	ACON 17/01/2023
24	TR/2022/0196	Nethercroft, Lowgate	Cut back mixed tree species	ACON 09/01/2023

b) Other Planning Matters:

- i. **Shepherd's Mill:** The Clerk reported that the SLDC Enforcement Team had confirmed that they intended to take no further action under the S165 Notice. It was **Agreed** that further details of their decision should be requested and to follow-up matters with the Valuation Office.

113/22 The Annual Parish Meeting: It was **Agreed** that this will be held on 21 March in the Institute and will revert to the usual format including a Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council, an update on PC finances and a presentation on progress with the Project. Representatives of local organisations will be invited to give brief updates on their current activities. Refreshments will be made available.

114/22 The Coronation of King Charles III: Councillors considered the role of the Parish Council and confirmed that it would be fully supportive of any reasonable activities proposed by local groups. It will not though take a lead in the organisation of events other than the decoration of the area around the bus shelter and Christmas tree site. The purchase of a limited amount of bunting etc. was approved for this purpose and Cllrs Burrow and Bagot will organise this. It was **Agreed** however that it will facilitate a village meeting for organisations to come together and discuss any plans / initiatives and this was set for 7.30 p.m. on 22 February.

115/22 Spring Newsletter: It was noted that this will need to be prepared for distribution in the Parish Magazine by 24 February. The Clerk undertook to write or collate items from Councillors on a variety of topics including the Annual Parish Meeting, the advent of W&FC, the Coronation event and a variety of other matters and prepare the Newsletter for print and delivery. The Chairman confirmed that future Newsletters for 2023 will be required for distribution by 23 June and 27 October.

116/22 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** The Clerk confirmed that a meeting with Helen Karaasian of County Highways was set for 01 March. It was noted that Cllr Battye had requested that she should attend as incoming Councillor for W&FC. On a point of order, the Chairman confirmed that the Parish Council representatives were to be its Traffic Management Group who would be

responsible for promoting the Parish Council View and reporting back on outcomes. Attendance by others must be as observers only as the Parish Council wished to maintain strict lines of communication through those Members nominated to represent it. All Parish Councillors were reminded that they should only act on PC business if they were instructed to do so.

- b) **Levens Lane Footpath:** The Clerk had spoken to Cllr. Bland who said that he was continuing to work on this but that it would now be taken over as a project by W&FC.
- c) **Parish Noticeboard:** Designs had been received from the suppliers and a preference was expressed for a serif font (Option 6) but slightly bolder than shown. The Clerk was asked to enquire about an additional commemoration of the Coronation.
- d) **Woodland Management:** Work continues to address the issues that have been reported to the Parish Council. It was **Agreed** to write to those residents concerned about tree issues.
- e) **Parish and Other Land:**
 - i. Maintenance Services: A job description has been prepared and will be discussed with those expressing an interest in the position.
 - ii. Brigsteer Road site: Mr Morris has kindly offered to strim the site.
 - iii. Gritting: There have been no further developments on this, but Cllr Battye will pursue through the new W&FC.
- f) **Levens Charities:** The Clerk reported that he is awaiting end of quarter fund values to assist consideration of whether Charity funds could or should be used for the Project.
- g) **Levens Greening Campaign:** Cllr Battye reported on a good meeting of the Group that had been held the previous evening. The Group is taking advice from CAfS on the creation of a possible constitution.
- h) **Christmas Event:** Cllr. Burrow reported receipts of approximately £609 and repeated the proposal to top-up the ring-fenced event fund to cover the costs of trees and then to propose some small donations as previously suggested. Cllr Burrow thanked the community for its support for the event.
- i) **HMLR:** The Clerk has queried the contention by HMLR that there is a defect in the cheque sent with the application for First Registration as they had cashed it in December 2021.

117/22 Correspondence: Items on the Schedule of Correspondence were noted. A number of these had been dealt with in the meeting but the following were mentioned in particular:

- Correspondence relating to trees. This gave rise to a question about the ownership of overhanging branches around Nethercroft and Beathwaite Gardens. It was agreed to write to the Management Company of Beathwaite Gardens. Cllr. Battye offered to look and report the matter to Highways if appropriate.
- A letter from Messrs MacDougall & Robinson expressing interest in affordable housing in Levens. Their names will be placed on the list of those expressing interest.
- An email from a resident on Meadow Wood relating to tipping on Levens Hall land. This has been passed on.

118/22 Items for Local Media: Increasing the coverage of local items remains work in progress.

119/22 Future Agenda Items: Items on the current Agenda will be followed up.

120/22 Date of the Next Meeting:

The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday, 14 March 2023 in the Levens Methodist Church.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Tuesday 21 March 2023 in the Institute

The meeting closed at 10.01 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date:.....