

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 08 November 2022 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 District Cllr.), R. Mason, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy.

In Attendance: County Cllr. J. Bland; W&FC Councillor S. Bavin; M. R. Curry (Clerk) and 1 member of the public.

74/22 Apologies for Absence: None

75/22 Declarations of interest: Cllrs. Battye, Atfield and Holmes declared their respective roles as Officers or Trustees with Levens Playing Fields.

76/22 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 11 October 2022 as a true record.

77/22 Public Participation: No matters were raised.

78/22 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

Cllr Battye reported that the Levens Playing Fields Committee was developing improvement plans for the MUGA which will involve wider consultation. She confirmed that there was no intention to include a Pump Track. The Committee was also considering its own Christmas activities.

b) Police: No report had been received from the Police. Cllrs Holmes and Burrow both reported incidents of cold calling or suspicious activities in Ambleside and Beetham respectively and it was agreed that parishioners should be vigilant and report suspicious behaviour.

c) District Councillor: Cllr. Holmes reported that he had attended the Cumbria Flood and Coast Forum organised by Cumbria County Council and United Utilities and held in Kendal on 20 October. He summarised the central funding that had been made available for flood and adaptation schemes and how some of this had been applied locally. He had attended a session on Nature Based Flood Solutions and one on Emergency, Preparedness and Response. Cumbria County Council has launched VIPER – the Vulnerable Identified Properties/People Emergency Register – designed to identify those at risk in flood situations. This should be included in Community Emergency Plans.

d) Shadow Councillor, W&FC: Cllr Battye confirmed that a virtual briefing on local government reorganisation is being held on 16 November with links in the previously circulated LGR Newsletter and that CALC had proposed one for 02 December. Other highlights are:

- A new Town Council has been agreed for Barrow.
- Recruitment to senior officer posts continues
- Plans to streamline local policing and step-up the role of PCSOs with some realignment of geographical areas of responsibility.
- The Green Space 2 Grow initiative which includes advice on allotments, orchards and local green spaces such as the Brigsteer Road site.

A survey issued by CALC on community engagement expectations was completed ready for submission by the Clerk.

e) County Councillor: Cllr Bland reported on the proposal to install flashing lights at 3 key locations around the school. Councillors **Agreed** to record its thanks to County Council for this development. Cllr Burrow wondered if there was any likelihood of getting yellow zig-zag lines at appropriate school entrances. Cllr Bland suggested that the Parish Council seek a site meeting with Highways Officers to discuss this and other issues. Despite previous requests for such a meeting it was **Agreed** that the Clerk should repeat this request.

Cllr. Bland was also pleased to report that the Moss Lane Bridge in the Lyth Valley had now re-opened.

Cllr. Holmes added that the Boundary Commission has proposed new parliamentary constituency boundaries which were now the subject of a consultation exercise ending on 05 December. Councillors agreed that comments would be individual rather than submitted as a collective view of the Parish Council

79/22 Finance

- a) Receipts 1 Sept - 30 Sept:** The Clerk reported that (probably as a result of disruption in the postal service) he had not yet received the bank statement for October and was unable to confirm receipts for the period. He would circulate details when the statement is received.
- b) Payments:** The following payments were **Approved:**
- i. M R Curry: Salary: October 2022: (PC: £368.65; Project £113.90; Charity £5.72; Mileage £15.60) £ 503.87
Councillors noted that a recent pay award had been confirmed which will include some back-pay and increased rates per hour going forward. The Clerk will provide details by email associated with his November timesheet.
 - ii. Printing Plus: Winter Newsletter: £ 154.30
- c) Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** In the absence of the most recent bank statement the Clerk was unable to provide updated financial details. However he was not aware of any transactions giving rise to concern.
- d) 2023-24 Budget and Precept:** The Clerk confirmed that he had conducted a 6-month budget review to 30 September 2022 and had circulated this in advance of the meeting, together with a first version draft budget for 2023-24. He reported that when explainable and justifiable variances are taken into account, income in the current financial year is on target, and, on the basis of projected income, will remain so to the end of the financial year. Likewise and on the same basis, expenditure, though showing a usual underspend in the first half-year, will also conclude in-line with the current budget when projected spend for the second half is taken into account. These projections have enabled the preparation of a draft budget for 2023-24, including an anticipated precept bid. Precept papers will not be received until mid-December and will not be required for submission to SLDC until late January so all matters can be finalised at the January meeting of the Parish Council. It was **Agreed** that the Chairman and Clerk will meet to review the proposals before the January meeting and that Members will review the draft, with any amendments, in time to confirm the budget at that meeting.
- e) Parish Council ICT Requirements:** The Clerk reported that proposals for new ICT equipment remain work in progress. There was discussion about the recently expired Zoom subscription and it was **Agreed** to renew this.
- f) Management of PC Finances (banking arrangements):** The Chairman has requested a face to face meeting with Lloyds as he continues explore best options to put to Members.

80/22 Levens Community Project

- a) Levens Community Project Advisory Group (PAG):** Cllr Mason presented a brief report from the meeting held on 01 November. Main items of report were:
- i. **Sale of Plots:** Plot 1 at Cotes is back on the market; Plot 3 at Church Hill is still the subject of interest subject to resolution of the overhead electricity cable which remains work in progress. Cllr Willacy undertook to talk to Tony Hills about the expiry of planning consent unless a material start is made at Plot 3.
 - ii. **Underhill and the New Village Hall:** Work on facing the retaining wall at Underhill has about 2 days work left before completion. Tenders for the construction phase are still not issued pending determination of optimum energy requirements and in particular the integration of renewable energy into the scheme. Mr Stuart Richardson, a local renewables specialist, addressed PAG as part of this information gathering phase.
 - iii. **Electricity Supply at the New Village Hall:** Cllr Mason reported that electricity supply is awaiting clarification of demand from the kitchen and much work is underway confirming kitchen design and load demand. This is feeding into supply options and Mr Richardson is looking into this question also. Tenders are ready to go out pending resolution of this matter. Work has commenced on construction of the boundary walls.

- iv. **The Supply of Accountancy Services:** The Clerk reported that the Quarter 2 VAT return is complete and progress can now be made on switching accountancy services from Dodd & Co to Armstrong Watson.

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

Following recommendation from the Project Advisory Group the following payment was **Approved**:
Milne Moser (Solicitors) – Legal costs incurred, abortive sale Plot 1 Cotes: £ 503.00

Note: Some of the work charged for will not have to be re-charged on a future sale of Plot 1.

81/22 Planning Applications:

- a) **The Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Schedule at 08 November had been circulated. Applications noted were:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	PC View	Decision
5	SL/2020/0983	Low Levens Fm	New Slurry Lagoon	No Objection	ACON 25/10/22
8	SL/2022/0938	Plot 2 Church Rd	Variation of previously submitted plans. See comment below.	No Objection	Decision awaited
15	SL/2022/0800	Humblebee House, (Plot 2 Cotes)	Non-material variation to SL/2022/0123	No Objection	Granted 20/09/22
18	SL/2022/0950	Bridge End Garage LA8 8EL	Major extensions to car dealership	Not considered	Application INVALID
19	SL/2022/0995	Whinthwaite House LA8 8NU	2-storey linked detached to house gym, sauna etc	Plans not yet available	

b) Other Planning Matters:

- i. **Ivy Cottage, off Hutton Lane:** SL/2022/0560: The Clerk confirmed that he had had a response from SLDC confirming that a Lawful Development Certificate was not appropriate for the proposed development.
- ii. **Shepherd's Mill:** Cllr Burrow reported that she understood that contractors had been engaged to insert new windows and other work associated with the refurbishment of the 1st floor flat. Cllr Holmes reported that in response to the request for the issue of a Section 125 Notice SLDC had written a strong letter to the owner and that the matter was best left with the Enforcement Team for the time being. The question of rateable status was still a live enquiry with the Valuation Office.
- iii. **The Langdales:** Cllr Holmes had discussed this with the Chair of the Planning Committee who had made enquiries of the Planning Inspectorate. The matter has not yet been considered.
- iv. **SLDC Local Plan:** Councillors had noted the consultation on the second Call for Sites which included one further site in Levens. They confirmed their view that for all the reasons submitted previously, Levens was not appropriate for further large scale housing development. It was **Resolved** to make a robust response as part of the current consultation exercise to be submitted by the closing date of 10 November 2022.

82/22 Community Emergency Plan: The Clerk confirmed that he has had responses from 5 individuals representing village organisations and that therefore there was sufficient response to enable a Group to be set-up to take forward the development of a Plan. He had provided draft insertions to the templates provided by CALC to give the Group something to work on. It was **Agreed** to convene a meeting of the Group under the leadership of Cllr Rogerson.

83/22 Levens Charities – Trustee's Report

On behalf of the Appointed Trustees, the Clerk confirmed that they had met immediately before the Parish Council meeting to receive a half-yearly report. Whilst fund values remained strong, investment performance over the half-year has shown some vulnerability to a volatile economic outlook and fund managers have repeated their warnings that investments may decrease in value. This led to discussion about the reinvestment of Charity funds in the affordable housing elements of the Project which will eventually be vested in the Charity. It was **Agreed** to seek advice from the new accountants about the prudence of cashing-in current investments and the Clerk was asked to

prepare a Report with recommendations. It was also confirmed that the Savin Brow Quarry Charity should be wound up and its assets amalgamated into the Levens Charity.

84/22 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** It was confirmed that the Parish Council should repeat its request for a meeting with CCC Highways to review and move forward on options.
- b) **Levens Lane Footpath:** Cllr. Bland said that there is to be a meeting with senior officers at CCC to agree how this can be progressed.
- c) **Parish Noticeboard:** Cllr Burrow confirmed that it would not be possible to secure a quote for a bespoke board through her contacts. The Clerk will continue research into suppliers, and propose options for consideration.
- d) **Woodland Management:** Further efforts to engage a woodland contractor are required.
- e) **Parish and Other Land:**
 - i. **Maintenance Services:** Two expressions of interest had been received as a result of the article in the Newsletter. It was **Agreed** to follow these up by producing a job description, agreeing hourly rates and arranging interviews.
 - ii. **Brigsteer Road site:** Cllr Mason will remind the stone-wallers at the Underhill site to provide a quote for the work to in support of an application for Landscape Grant.
 - iii. It was noted that the National Trust had offered to strim the floristically rich site at the Crossings and that this offer had been accepted.
- f) **Levens Greening Campaign:** Cllr Battye reported on a positive meeting of the Greening Group held the previous evening which had discussed local initiatives and planning for future events. Cllr Battye will advise on arrangements for an on-line session on Climate Change Toolkit sponsored by SLDC. The future of the Greening Group was also discussed and Cllr. Battye will produce options on how it might be structured and its relationship with the Parish Council.
- g) **Christmas Event:** Cllr. Burrow reported that she had had to decline the kind donation of a tree as it was too big to manage with the resources available. An alternative tree will be procured however and dressed with decorations and lights. Arrangements for electricity costs had been discussed with Vanessa at the Village Shop. Plans for associated events were discussed, but no formal decisions were made other than a switch-on.
- h) **Winter Newsletter:** The Chairman reported that the Newsletter had been printed, delivered and distributed successfully. The Clerk noted a couple of errors on Councillor's details which will be corrected in the next edition.

85/22 Correspondence: Items on the Schedule of Correspondence were noted. There were no items requiring discussion otherwise than had been discussed in the meeting

86/22 Items for Local Media: No items were proposed.

87/22 Future Agenda Items: Items on the current Agenda will be followed up; otherwise, the following items were noted:

- a) Budget and precept

88/22 Date of the Next Meeting: The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday, 10 January 2023 to be held in the Levens Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 10.07 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date:.....