

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 25 November 2014 in the Methodist church, Levens at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs R.Atfield (Chairman), Cllr S.Bagot, H.Burrow, C.Hammond, D.Martin, R.Mason, S.Roberts, J.Thacker, and P.Davidson (clerk) + County Cllr J.Bland + District Cllr A.Rawlinson + 76 members of the public

176/14 Apologies for absence

Tony Hills of Damson Design was not able to attend due to medical reasons.

177/14 Declarations of interest

None

178/14 Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman welcomed members of the public to the meeting, and explained that the aim was to provide a summary of the Levens Community Project (LCP), it's status and the forward plan. He also welcomed Sylvia Berry as a new member of the Parish Council.

179/14 Finance

It was **resolved** to authorise the following payment:

- Damson Design: design work for LCP £3840.00

180/14 Presentation on the Levens Community Project

Cllr Mason gave a presentation on the LCP (the presentation material is available on the Parish Council page of the Levens website).

181/14 Public Participation

A number of questions and comments were tabled by members of public, as detailed below. Where questions/comments were similar in nature, they have been grouped together. Where responses were given by the Parish Council, these are shown in **bold**.

Project as a whole

- Is it true that the SLDC planning officer is broadly in favour of the project and is likely to advise elected members accordingly?
- **Yes, the SLDC planning officer is in favour of the scheme.**
- **The project as a whole is seen as benefitting the community and is seen as a good example of a community-led project.**
- **SLDC are prepared to be flexible on the requirements for affordables.**
- SLDC are interested in community-led plans.

Does the village want/need a village hall?

- To say that 95% of the community want the village hall, is too simplistic.
- Not against a village hall as such, but against wooliness.
- The Parish Council is doing a wonderful job and should persevere.
- Once the viability of the project is fully known, will the Parish Council bring the final proposal to the village as a referendum?
- Endorse the request for a referendum.
- **The Council have carried out the mandate of the Parish Plan.**
- **The priority for the Parish Council is to establish whether the project is viable. Once this is clear, then the Parish Council can decide how best to move forwards.**
- Brigsteer village hall is seen by the village as a real asset.
- Brigsteer didn't need to sell parish assets and they got lottery funding.
- **The village plan justified a claim for lottery funding, but changes in the criteria for eligibility meant that Levens was deemed to be not eligible for lottery funding.**

- The Institute is not fit for purpose, so the village needs a new village hall.
- Lots of people are supportive. Thanks to the Parish Council for all the hard work.

Village hall overall design and planning

- Is it not premature to be submitting detailed planning for the village hall in advance of a business plan or a detailed requirement for the hall?
- A huge amount of work has been done on the requirements for the village hall, including visits to other village halls and questionnaires to user groups.
- It makes sense to submit for outline planning first, followed by definition of the detailed specification for the village hall, and then submission of detailed planning.
- Go for outline planning as a priority.
- Opposed to going for outline planning first.
- **The Parish Council will consider the question of whether it would be preferable to submit for outline planning for the village hall as a priority, in advance of submitting for detailed planning.**
- Where will the recycling site be?
- **Not yet decided.**
- The site for the village hall is not good. A better site would be the playing field next to the bowling green.
- **The playing fields cannot be used, as the site is owned by Dallam, who have stated categorically that it cannot be used as a site. On the other hand, the quarry next to the church is owned by the Parish Council.**

Village hall bar

- Is there to be a bar in the hall?
- A bar is controlled by licensing. The Parish Council could therefore control its use.
- The Institute have been running a bar for the last two years, with no complaints.
- **It has not been decided whether to have a bar in the hall.**

Village hall costs and income

- Concern about the ongoing running costs of village halls and their viability. Many struggling to stay open. There is a big difference between the specification and the detailed planning for a hall used purely for local activities and one used as a venue for events.
- Is this to be small village hall or a commercial venture?
- **The hall design is intended to be multi-purpose.**
- The proposed affordable flats for the elderly would supplement the income from the village hall.
- Will the affordable housing be managed by a housing association? If so, then this would reduce the overall income to the Parish Council.
- There is a lot of competition locally for wedding venues, including Gilpin Bridge and soon the Villa.
- **The village hall is a very different venue to that of the Villa.**
- Residents who are concerned about the financial aspects of the project should support the Council in planning the project. This would assist rather than oppose.

The Chairman thanked all present for their valuable comments and questions, which would be considered carefully.

182/14 Date of next meetings

- an extraordinary meeting is to be held on 9 December, to transact LCP-related business.
- next ordinary meeting of the parish council is on 13 January 2015.

Signed (Chairman)

Date