

# Levens Parish Council

**MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held in the Levens Methodist Church on the 12 April 2022.**

**Present:** Cllrs R. Atfield, S. Bagot, J. Battye, H. Burrow, K. Holmes, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy; County Cllr. J. Bland, M. R. Curry (Clerk) and 1 member of the public.

**128/21 Apologies for Absence:** Cllr. R. Mason (prior engagement)

**129/21 Declarations of interest:** Interests were declared in respect of the following items:

- a) 9(c): Application for grant by St John's Church: Cllrs Atfield and Bagot
- b) 13(h): Cllrs. Atfield and Holmes declared their Trusteeship of the Levens Playing Fields Charity and Cllr. Battye declared that she was Secretary to the Levens Playing Fields Committee.

**130/21 Minutes:** It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 08 March 2022 as a true record.

**131/21 Public Participation:** There were no matters raised by the public for consideration.

## 132/21 Reports

### a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- (i) Cllr Atfield reported on a meeting on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) held via Teams on 15 March. Progress to date had been reviewed and highlighted a number of matters of detail including the make-up of the new Councils and the establishment of Boards to develop priority themes. Parish Councillors had been encouraged to think about how things might be done better. With local elections to be held on 05 May, it was **Agreed** to include an item on a future Agenda to consider the impact of LGR and the respective roles of elected Councillors.
- (ii) Cllr Holmes reported on a meeting of the A590 Working Group held on 31 March also attended by Cllrs Bland and Burrow. Plans are approaching delivery stage with road marking improvements proposed for Meathop and Foulshaw Moss. New signage is also likely for Brettagh Holt where the exit of Force Lane remains a cause for concern. Planners are still looking at possible improvements at the Levens / A6 inter-change as well as design and feasibility for a roundabout at Gilpin Bridge. On that, Cllr Bland cautioned that, whilst the locality had done very well to secure £6M for improvements, it would be very much down to what money was available for that initiative. The increase in heavy traffic crossing the west-bound carriageway was noted and Cllrs Rogerson and Willacy **Agreed** to test the effectiveness of the automatic signage at Foulshaw.
- (iii) Cllr Battye reported on a litter-pick in late March. She had done the stretch between the Strickland Arms and the A590 where there was much litter, but no bin in the popular lay-by south of the pub. It was noted that it was SLDC policy not to provide bins but **Agreed** that the Parish Council should write to SLDC to clarify this and ask for better signage.

**b) Police:** There was no report from the Police.

**c) District Councillor:** In addition to his report on the A590 (120/21(ii) above) Cllr. Holmes added more detail on LGR. He confirmed that there was as yet no decision on where the administrative hub for Westmorland and Furness would be.

**d) County Councillor:**

- i. In addition to his contribution to the A590 report, Cllr Bland referred to LGR and the importance of seeing post-election developments.
- ii. Other matters relating to Levens Lane would be dealt with later in the Agenda.

## 133/21 Finance

**a) Receipts for the period 01 March – 31 March 2022:** Councillors noted receipts of £3,975.35 including a refund of salary from the Project (£2,939.45); receipts from the Christmas event (£481.27) and a sum from the wind-up of the Village Maintenance Association (£474.13).

**b) Payments:** The following payments were **Approved:**

- i. M R Curry - Salary March 2022: (PC £378.23; Project £226.36; Charity £93.75  
Mileage £13.00; Expenses £19.39) £730.63

ii. HMRC: PAYE Q4	£499.54
iii. Tom Hecht: Website development costs	£958.31
iv. CALC: Annual subscription	£266.47
v. Mitchinsons: Payroll services 2021-22	£72.00
vi. King's Food Bank, Kendal (previously agreed in principle) was <b>Ratified</b> :	£481.27
In addition, Councillors noted payments-out requested by Cllr Bland from his Project account:	
vii. Helsington Parish Council	£1,000.00
viii. Alan G Fawcett	£144.00

**c) Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** The bank balance of £14,398.00 at 31 March was noted. A bank reconciliation and summary of ring-fenced funds would be conducted as part of the end of year audit.

**d) Management of PC Finances:** The Chairman reported that ongoing discussions with Lloyds Bank looked promising.

**e) Clerk's Allowances:** It was **Agreed** that the Clerk should check if any formal guidance or comparables were available against which to make a decision. Allowances in respect of the Project should be made via Capacity Grant.

### 134/21 Levens Community Project

**a) Levens Community Project Advisory Group (PAG):** In the absence of Cllr. Mason the Clerk reported that a meeting of PAG had been held on 04 April. Key items noted were:

**b) Sale of Plots:**

**Cotes:** The sale of Plot 3 had completed with net proceeds of £159,981.00. The sale of Plot 2 has delayed pending resolution of a planning issue. The decision agreed by email to accept an offer of £172,000.00 for Plot 1 was formally **Ratified**.

**Church Hill:** A recent offer of £155,000.00 for Plot 3 had been accepted by the Parish Council by email and was formally confirmed.

**c) Underhill:** Tim Thacker continues to make progress on infrastructure works. Tony Hills is coordinating quotes for M&E services following which tender packs will be ready for issue.

**d) New Village Hall:**

i. Boundary Walls: The revised Party Wall Agreement has been concluded. It is expected that Alan Wilson will return to site in late April to cut-back the rock faces to the agreed lines.

ii. A third quote for the building of boundary walls as designed by Paul Snape is still awaited.

**e) Finance:**

i. The following invoices were **Approved** for payment (as recommended by PAG):

• Milne Moser: Interim charges Sale of Plot 2, Cotes	£1,323.00
• FabTec: Headwall grate, Cotes	£900.00

ii. The Clerk confirmed that he had written to Bruce Johnson to enquire about the possible availability of additional Infrastructure Grant.

iii. An invoice for £24,560.00 + VAT has been issued to T Thacker for the sale of stone.

iv. Councillors noted that a bank reconciliation as of 23 March showed Project funds-in-hand of £1,204,955.14. This includes receipts from the sale of Plot 1, Cotes and Infrastructure Grant.

v. A meeting with Armstrong Watson (Accountants) to discuss VAT matters took place on 09 March from which a response is awaited.

### 135/21 Schedule of Planning Applications:

**a) Councillors reviewed the following applications:**

PC Ref	Location	Proposal	Application No.	PC View	Outcome
5	Low Levens Farm	Construct slurry lagoon	SL/2020/0983	PC had submitted No Objection	Decision currently deferred
42	The Langdales LA8 8PJ	Variation of conditions	SL/2022/0067	Concerns expressed about variation of conditions	Letter of objection sent. Application called-in.
45	Plot 2: Cotes	Erect single dwelling, garage etc.	SL/2022/0134	Revision of previous consent considered	No Objection. Delay noted
46	Pinfold LA8 8PA	Single storey extension & associated modifications	SL/2022/0134	No objection but questions remain about the route of the main sewer.	No objection submitted with a note to consider impact of build on main sewer

47	46 Meadow Wood	Detached summerhouse	SL/2022/0148	The PC has no reason to object	No Objection submitted.
48	Low Levens Farm	Steel framed roof	7/2022/5178	No objection	No Objection submitted.
49	Heaves Farm	New midden store & concrete yard	SL/2022/0285	No Objection	No Objection submitted
50	Levens CofE School	Classroom extension etc	5/2022/9003	No Objection	No Objection submitted
51	Shepherd's Mill, Levens	Application for prior approval for a new dwelling house on site.	CU/2022/0003	The PC welcomes this application	No Objection submitted 26/04/2022

**b) Other Planning Matters:** No other planning matters were raised.

### 136/21 Levens Charities

The Secretary to the Charities reported on a meeting of Appointed Trustees on 05 April 2022. Performance of investments has been good, but Fund Managers have warned that in an uncertain economic time, the current level of return could not be guaranteed. A full report would be prepared following receipt of the end of year figures. Particular items of report were:

- a) Secretary's hours: it was **Agreed** to reimburse the Parish Council the sum of £568.43 for salary paid and to increase the contractual allowance to £600p.a.
- b) In order that end of year reports could be made effectively, it was **Agreed** to move Charity meetings from March/September to May/November. Guidance would be amended accordingly.
- c) Applications for the award of grants:
  - i) St John's Church, Levens: Cllrs. Atfield and Bagot left the meeting having declared interest. Chaired by Cllr Rogerson, the remaining Trustees considered recommendations from the Appointed Trustees from their meeting on 05 April. Cllr. Burrow stressed that the Sole Trustee (the Parish Council) must make objective decisions based on the fit with stated criteria. As reflected in the Minutes of their meeting, concerns had been expressed about the lack of detailed build specifications based on a single estimate, the fact that the application was for the entire cost of the project and that the Scheme of Administration was ambiguous in respect of grants to religious or academic institutions. However the Appointed Trustees acknowledged that the church building itself does provide community benefit and there was a desire to support the application in principle. They had considered a possible award of £2,500, but felt that ultimately the Parish Council as Sole Trustee must make the final decision. In discussion, the general Trustees acknowledged the difficulty created by the Scheme of Administration and the pros and cons of the application against the stated criteria. It was concluded that the applicant should be requested to emphasise the extent of community benefit from this project and that the Charity would consider a possible award of £2,500 subject to receiving a second quote for the work. Cllrs Atfield and Bagot returned to the meeting. It was **Agreed** to review the Scheme of Administration and funding criteria.
  - ii) Levens Methodist Church: The Appointed Trustees had had similar concerns about the application for a grant towards the development of the Church garden as a community asset. They noted that no plans had been submitted and that only one quote had been supplied. The Parish Council as Sole Trustee **Agreed** the recommendation that a grant of up to £1,000 should be offered subject to sight of plans and evidence of a second quote.
- d) Use of Charity Funds to support Levens Community Project: Parish Councillors noted the conclusion of the Appointed Trustees that the increase in capital asset value through land acquisition and built property together with increased revenue produced as a result of rents flowing to the Charity would significantly outweigh the current cumulative value of Charity funds based on investment funds and interest. Whilst the Chairman expressed the need for a cautious approach, the Parish Council as Sole Trustee **Agreed** in principle to consider a formal proposal in due course to realise and apply Charity assets to the furtherance of the Project.

**137/21 Village Traffic Management:** The Chairman thanked Cllrs Rogerson and Willacy for embedding the SID poles. It was noted that Arnside PC has responded to a previous request for advice and it was **Agreed** to accept Cllr McSweeney's offer to come and talk to the Parish Council. The Chairman had researched the Auto SpeedWatch system which appeared to have a number of drawbacks and further awareness would be required before acquiring the system.

**138/21 Parish Disaster Plan:** The Clerk confirmed that CALC was leading an initiative to provide guidance to Parish Councils on the preparation of Emergency/Resilience/Disaster planning. It was **Agreed** to work with this scheme and advise the representative at the Institute accordingly.

**139/21 Parish Council Noticeboard:** It was **Agreed** that the main Parish noticeboard outside the Methodist Church was in need of replacement, but that a range of suppliers and products should be investigated as evidence of a robust procurement process.

**140/21 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda**

- a) **Levens Lane Footpath:** Cllr. Bland reported that a number of issues remained to be resolved including the width of the path. These matters were the subject of ongoing negotiation.
- b) **Parish and Other Land**
  - i. **Brigsteer Road site:** No response has yet been received from Friends of the Lake District in respect of the re-submitted application for grant.
  - ii. **Registration of Land at Cotes:** There remained as yet no response from HMLR.
- c) **Woodland Management:** Cllr Holmes reported that he had not been able to contact Russell Boow and that work would now have to be paused for the bird-nesting season. Councillors noted a letter received from Messrs Capsticks stating that no birds nested in the trees requiring attention adjoining their property. It was noted that many saplings had been cut around the stables off Brigsteer Road (not PC land). Much brash had been left.
- d) **South Westmorland Village Maintenance Association:** The need for a bad-weather response plan was stressed. It was **Agreed** to defer the establishment of a Working Group until the next meeting.
- e) **Parish Council Website:** The Clerk confirmed that the new site was up and running. Parish Councillors recorded their thanks and appreciation to Tom Hecht for the work he had done. It was **Agreed** that the Working Group would meet via Zoom to familiarise itself with the new site.
- f) **Platinum Jubilee:** There were no additional developments to report.
- g) **Playing Fields Pump Track:** Cllr Battye reported that, following the decision by Dallam Tower not to support the development of the pump track, the Playing Fields Committee (LPFC) would be talking to young adults to discuss alternative facilities. LPFC next meets on 25 April.
- h) **The Greening Campaign:** Cllr Battye reported on plans for a series of meetings on greening topics to be presented by guest speakers, commencing with a talk on Gardening for Wildlife (09 May in the Institute). It was **Agreed** that the £75 potentially allocated to Phase 2 of the Greening Campaign might be used to publicise these events, but that future funding requirements needed to be highlighted and budgeted for.
- i) **B4RN:** Cllr. Rogerson reported that over 300 properties were now live and that whilst future connections would continue the Project was now effectively completed. The local B4RN Group will cease to exist by early May and will sign off with a leaflet promoting its achievements. It was **Agreed** that the Parish Council will award £150 towards the costs of this initiative.

**141/21 Correspondence:** No other items of correspondence were discussed.

**142/21 Future Agenda Items:** Items confirmed for the next and/or future meetings were:

- i. Local Government Reorganisation
- ii. Contingencies for adverse winter weather

**143/21 Date of the Next Meeting:** The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be the Annual Parish Council Meeting to be held at 7.30p.m. on Tuesday 10 May 2022 in the Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 10.12 p.m.

Signed ..... (Chairman) Date:.....