

# Levens Parish Council

## Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 13 September 2022 in Levens Methodist Church at 7.30 p.m.

**Present:** Cllrs. R. Atfield (Chairman), S. Bagot, J. Battye, H. Burrow, K. Holmes (and as District Cllr.), R. Mason, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy; M. R. Curry (Clerk), County Cllr. J Bland and 2 members of the public.

Before commencement of the formal meeting, the Chairman read out a statement on behalf of Levens Parish Council in memory of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who had died on Thursday 08 September 2022. In commemoration and thanks for her life, Councillors and members stood in silence for one minute.

**45/22 Apologies for Absence:** All Councillors were present and there were no apologies.

**46/22 Declarations of interest:** Cllr Willacy made a Declaration of Interest in respect of Planning Application SL/2022/0800 to be considered at Item 8.

**47/22 Minutes:** It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 12 July 2022 as a true record.

**48/22 Public Participation:** No matters were raised under this item.

### **49/22 Reports:**

- a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:** Cllr. Battye reported on a recent meeting of the Playing Fields Committee at which it had been agreed to hold a further public consultation on plans for the MUGA. This is to be held in the Pavilion between 3.15 & 6.30 p.m. where plans will be available for inspection. Responses will be considered at a Playing Fields Committee meeting to be held next week.
- b) Police:** No report had been received from the Police.
- c) District Councillor:** Cllr. Holmes reported as follows:
  - i. Further consultation on plans for improvements to the A590 take place in late October / early November on a date to be confirmed.
  - ii. SLDC business is continuing during the period of mourning in line with national protocols.
- d) Shadow Councillor, Westmorland & Furness Council**

Cllr. Battye reminded Members that updates on the development of the new Council are reported in the regular newsletters which are circulated. Recent highlights include:

  - i. Sam Plumb (previous Chief Executive at Barrow Borough Council) has been appointed as Chief Executive of the new Council and will take up post in December. Interviews are now being arranged for the Heads of Finance and Legal Services.
  - ii. A 'distributed model' of administration will see regional centres established in existing Council buildings in Penrith, Kendal and Barrow. Both the County Offices and South Lakeland House in Kendal will be used and it is likely that Kendal will be the registered headquarters of the new Council. The design of a new logo has been approved and will be publicised soon.
  - iii. The Council is consulting on its headline plan with a core aim of transferring services safely. Cllr Battye is on the Scrutiny Panel and directly involved in Community Climate Change initiatives.

In response to Cllr. Battye's report, Cllr Willacy raised concern about the cost of establishing the new Council, particularly in respect of travel associated with many meetings. He hoped that remote meeting technologies such as Zoom were being fully employed. Cllr. Battye acknowledged this point and will check. In other areas, there are other costs savings such as the reduction from 3 chief executives to 1.
- e) County Councillor:**

As a general observation on the Shadow Council, Cllr. Bland commented that he would have preferred to see a Committee structure rather than a Cabinet. Otherwise he acknowledged that there was little report. Work on the Moss Lane Bridge is expected to be completed in a month or so, although he has raised concerns about structural design with the senior Engineer. Levens Lane footpath will be discussed as an item later on the Agenda.

Cllr. Burrow raised the issue of the sapling trees growing on the road verge at the junction of the A590 below the Hare and Hounds. Cllr. Bland thought there might be some debate about whose land they are growing on, but if it is Highways land, they will be cleared.

## 50/22 Finance

- a) **Receipts 01 July – 31 August:** The Clerk confirmed one receipt of £35.00 (allotment rent) for the period.
- b) **Payments:** The following payments were **Approved:**
- M R Curry – Salary July 2022 (PC £343.30; Project £264.56 = £ 626.03)
  - M R Curry – Salary August 2022 (PC £149.29; Project £151.92  
Charity £5.71; mileage £22.75; expenses £40.00 = £369.67). **Total due:** £977.53
- c) **Ratification:** A payment to Printing Plus made between meetings on the basis of email agreement for the Summer Newsletter was **Ratified** in the sum of: £154.30
- d) **Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** The reconciled bank balance of £24,719.14 at 31 August 2022 was noted, as was one unrepresented cheque totalling £154.30, leaving a net balance of £24,564.84. Councillors also noted an updated summary of ring-fenced funds.
- e) **Annual Insurance Supplier:** The Clerk reported that he had investigated options including an on-line opportunity from Zurich at £300 as opposed to the original quote of £430. However, the former reduces cover in relation to street furniture and office equipment and there was discussion about the wisdom of this. Furthermore, there were some grey areas about what was included in street furniture (bus shelters, walls etc) and whether the Project needs to begin insurance of property on which development has started. The Clerk undertook to revert to the insurance company and circulate further recommendations for agreement by email before the next meeting.
- f) **Subscription to Parish On-line:** It was **Resolved** to renew this subscription for a further year at £45.00
- g) **Clerk's Issues:**
- ICT Requirements: As reported in July, the Clerk has concerns about ICT hardware to support the work of the Parish Council. At face value, the PC has no functioning printer (previous one irreparable) and a replacement for the 2014 laptop currently in use is advised before it too fails. Cllr Willacy supported the view that Levens should invest in a new computer and take into account the cost of new software and training / set-up. The PC could go ahead and authorise procurement of new equipment to meet these requirements and solve its own issues. The Clerk however reported that neither Helsington nor Crosthwaite (for which he is now providing non-financial clerking service) have laptops and that Levens is currently relying on Helsington's printer. Both these Councils have acknowledged the need to provide new laptops, but in the interest of public finances it should at least be considered as to whether there is a more cost effective shared solution, but which at the same time secures individual parish financial interest. Members authorised the Clerk to undertake further work on this in liaison with the other Councils and present costed options. Cllr. Holmes undertook to explore whether financial support might be available from his SLDC Member budget.
  - Training and costs: Members **Resolved** to support the Clerk's training and costs for the CiLCA qualification and to pay the current invoice from CALC for £180.00 for training courses subject to discussion with Helsington and Crosthwaite about shared training costs.
- h) **Audit:** The Annual Governance and Accountability Report is with external auditors. Members **Ratified** their previous email decision to remain opted-in to future arrangements for external audit as recommended by the Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments.
- i) **Management of PC Finances** (banking arrangements): The Chairman reported that this remains work in progress.

## 51/22 Levens Community Project

- a) **Levens Community Project Advisory Group:** Cllr Mason presented a brief report from the meeting held on 06 September. Main items of report were:
- Sale of Plots:** Plot 1, Cotes, is once more under offer and the prospective purchasers are said to be keen to complete. The prospective purchaser of Plot 3 at Church Road has withdrawn as the Parish Council could not agree to his open ended proposal to pay 50% of an estimated cost for the diversion of an overhead cable. The Project has instructed Aptus

to provide an alternative quote on the basis of which it may determine a level of contribution that it is prepared to recommend.

- ii. **Underhill and the new Village Hall:** Further work on walling is expected to re-start / begin in the near future.
- iii. **Electricity Supply: New Village Hall:** Cllr Mason advised Members that there is considerable effort being applied to securing a cost effective solution to securing an electricity supply to the new Village Hall. Electricity NorthWest have supplied several conflicting quotes with the latest suggesting a cost of £75,000. The Point of Contact and proposed route proposed do not appear to take account of more simple and less costly options and work is underway to clarify the basis of cost with ENW and to explore alternative solutions.
- iv. **The Supply of Accountancy Services:** The appointment of Armstrong Watson as new accountants to the Project was **Agreed**.
- v. **To approve payments as recommended by PAG:** Payment of the following invoices was **Approved**:
  - Levens PC: Refund of VAT received by the Project but due to the PC: £288.70
  - Levens PC: Refund of salary paid by the PC for Project work: £1,599.78

**52/22 Planning Applications:**

- a) **The Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Schedule at 13 September were noted including a review of those cases not yet determined. Applications discussed were:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	PC View	Decision
14	SL/2022/0768	Levens Hall	New interior glass door – listed building consent	No Objection	
15	SL/2022/0123	Humblebee Hse (Plot 2, Cotes)	Non-material amendment to SL/2022/0800	No Objection	

- b) **Other Planning Matters:**

- i. **Shepherd’s Mill:** Cllr. Burrow confirmed that the vendor, Mr Peter Bowker had pulled out of the sale just a day before exchange of contracts, leaving the prospective purchasers distraught and significantly out of pocket. Cllr Burrow expressed her own deep despair and sympathy for the purchasers after all she had done to try to resolve this long-standing issue. The prospect now remains that the village will retain a derelict building at its heart. Cllr Rogerson confirmed that there was growing Facebook comment expressing disappointment. Following discussion, it was **Resolved**:
  - That the Clerk should write to the District Valuer stating the case for a reversal of the de-rated status of the property and explain why there are grounds for a ‘Reason for Change’ based on the owners withdrawal from sale.
  - That the Clerk should draft a letter from the Parish Council to Mr Bowker expressing its deep disappointment at this development.
- ii. **The Langdales:** The Clerk confirmed that he had followed the process outlined by the Planning Inspectorate and submitted a revised letter of objection to the proposed development at the Langdales. He will make enquiries about the next stage of the process.

**53/22 Parish Emergency Plan:** The Clerk confirmed that the Emergency Plan Working Group had met on 19 July and had reviewed the pro-formas supplied by CALC to assist Parishes in preparing a plan. As advised in the Guidance, the Group had agreed that the best way forward was to recommend to the Parish Council that it invites key community stakeholders to join a Community Response Group as a means of coordinating a Community Emergency Plan (CEP). The Group had felt it was not the intention of the Parish Council to lead on the initiative, but that it is in a good position to coordinate a first meeting of representatives from key community bodies. It was **Agreed** that the Parish Council should write inviting representatives (including from the Village Shop and local pubs) to an initial meeting to begin the process.

**54/22 Levens Charity:** It was **Agreed** that Nominated Trustees would meet at 7.00 p.m. on 08 November, immediately before the Parish Council meeting, to receive a half-yearly report from the Secretary. It was confirmed that over £10,000 had been received from B4RN by way of donations from customers in acknowledgement of the work to connect houses undertaken by local volunteers. The Parish Council thanked the B4RN Group for facilitating this initiative. There was brief discussion about key projects that might benefit from this injection of funds which will be developed by the Trustees.

**55/22 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda**

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** Cllr. Bland has had difficulty in securing a meeting with CCC officers to develop proposals. The Parish Council **Resolved** to write formally to CCC to request a meeting.
- b) **Levens Lane Footpath:** Cllr Bland is continuing to progress options for this initiative.
- c) **Parish Noticeboard:** The Clerk reported that investigations into an appropriate board at an appropriate price continue. Cllr Bland recommended that the Clerk contact the Clerk at Witherslack who has been involved in procuring a board recently.
- d) **Woodland Management:** Cllr. Holmes confirmed that work should now be planned for the Autumn / Winter to address ash die-back and residents issues.
- e) **Parish and Other Land:**
  - i. Maintenance Services: Cllr Mason will follow-up on possibilities.
  - ii. Brigsteer Road site: Cllr Willacy will put together specifications for the walling required along the northern boundary wall. This will then be used to secure quotes from contractors which will be put to Friends of the Lake District in support of an application for Landscape Grant.
  - iii. Netball stand on Parish Land: Cllr. Battye confirmed that this has been removed. The Chairman thanked Cllr Battye for posting the sign requiring removal.
- f) **Levens Greening Campaign:** Cllr. Battye reported on two upcoming local initiatives:
  - i. The Great Big Green Weekend: The weekend of 23/25 September has been designated as a national celebration of community action to tackle climate change. A full programme of events will take place in Levens based in the Methodist Church and the Institute and supported by a grant from Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS). Posters will be displayed.
  - ii. CAfS has completed a roof map of Levens which will show where solar panels could be best placed for sustainable energy. Cllr Battye hoped this would be of interest to the local community.

Cllr Battye requested a slot on the November Agenda to discuss SLDCs recently issued Climate Toolkit for Parish Councils.

**56/22 Correspondence:** Items on the Schedule of Correspondence were noted. Cllr Burrow referred to a note from Vanessa at the Village Shop which raised the question of electricity costs for lighting the tree. The Parish Council agreed in principle to foot the costs of lighting – but this raised a further issue about the rising costs of procuring a tree. Cllr Burrow had had some thoughts on these issues and will bring these to the next meeting of the Council.

**57/22 Future Agenda Items:** Items on the current Agenda will be followed up; otherwise, the following items were noted:

- a) Computer / printer solutions
- b) Climate Change Toolkit
- c) Christmas tree arrangements

**58/22 Date of the Next Meeting:** The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday, 11 October 2022 to be held in the Levens Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 9.44 p.m.

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