

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 12 September 2023 in Levens Methodist Church at commencing at 7.15 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. R. Atfield (Chairman), S. Bagot, H. Burrow, J. Battye (and as W&FC Councillor), R. Mason, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy

In Attendance: M. R. Curry (Clerk).

Before the commencement of the formal meeting, Cllr. Peter Thornton, Westmorland and Furness Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Assets, gave a presentation on the role and work of the Highways Section of the Council. He gave data on day-to-day activity including the programme of pot-hole repair and referred to the value of the HIAMS reporting system accessed via the W&FC website. Members of the public are encouraged to use this to report highways issues. National details of roadworks, diversions etc. can also be found on www.one.network/uk. He also mentioned strategic work including the development of a Winter Service Policy to clarify priorities for maintaining open roads in adverse conditions. There is also a developing policy on the designation of 20m.p.h. zones within local communities. This is a bottom-up initiative requiring a procedural approach based on local consultation and the fulfilment of legal requirements. Highways will work with Parish Councils to see if criteria for implementation have been satisfied and to agree costs. Councillors noted this initiative for further consideration. During a question-and-answer session Cllr. Thornton noted that one of the new school flashing lights has not been working since installation and promised to look into this. At the end of the session, Cllr. Atfield thanked Cllr. Thornton for his informative presentation and expressed appreciation of his effort to bring W&FC activity to local communities.

35/23 Apologies for Absence: Apologies had been received from Cllr. Holmes

36/23 Declarations of Interest: Cllrs. Atfield and Battye declared an interest in matters concerning Levens Playing Fields.

37/23 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 11 July 2023 as a true record.

38/23 Public Participation: There being no members of the public present, no matters were raised.

39/23 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- i. Cllr. Atfield had attended the on-line 'Pot Hole Event' held by W&FC on 19 July which had outlined how the Council is prioritising its work on road maintenance.
- ii. Cllr. Atfield had also attended the on-line AGM of the South Lakeland District Association of CALC on 26 July. In addition to the normal business, the speaker was Cllr. Helen Chaffey, Chair of W&FC's South Lakeland Locality Board. The Board has funds to offer as grants. Current priorities are Empowering Places to be Proud of and health and social welfare.
- iii. Cllr. Bagot had attended a recent meeting of the Institute Committee. Bookings were looking very healthy to December; a new Treasurer had been appointed and a new Film Club was being established.
- iv. Cllr. Battye reported that there would be a meeting of the Levens Playing Field Committee during the week commencing 19 September.

b) Westmorland & Furness Council: Cllr Battye reported as follows:

- i. She is seeking ways of how best her £1,000 member grant allocation may be used.
- ii. The Locality Board has met and is establishing Working Groups on a variety of issues.
- iii. The Health and Scrutiny Overview Committee is focusing on providing support for vulnerable people over the coming winter.
- iv. During a report on local hospital provision, and in response to Cllr. Bagot, Cllr. Battye undertook to enquire about plans for the future of the Helm Chase unit in Kendal.

c) Police: Recent editions of Focus had been circulated but there had been no items of specific relevance to Levens. The Clerk reported that he had had recent correspondence with PCSO Park who had acknowledged the issues to do with pavement parking and an inappropriately parked vehicle that had been brought to her attention.

40/23 Finance

- a) **Receipts 01 July – 31 August 2023:** Cllrs noted that there had been no receipts during the period.
- b) **Payments Required:** The following payments were **Approved:**
- i) M R Curry: Salary July & August –
 - July 2023: (PC: £306.00; Project: £309.90; Charity: £0.00 Expenses £4.15; Mileage: £10.80 = £630.85)
 - August 2023: (PC: £156.16; Project: £123.99; Charity: £6.14 Expenses £0.00; Mileage: £21.60 = £307.89 + a further £3.49 for stationery)
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| Combined total | £ 942.23 |
| ii) Tom Hecht – expenses: Domain name annual renewal | £ 3.78 |
| iii) Parish On-line - Annual subscription | £ 45.00 |
| iv) Zurich Municipal Insurance – Annual Premium | £ 461.44 |
| v) Thwaites Treecare Ltd – Ratify payment for strimming etc | £ 300.00 |
| vi) Information Officer: Annual Fee by D/D | £ 35.00 |
- c) **Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** Councillors noted the reconciled bank balance of £16,907.85 held by the Parish Council on 31 August 2023 and the Chairman was authorised to sign the bank statement. They also noted a statement of ring-fenced funds showing sums in favour of woodland management (£1,600.00) and for the Christmas event (£1,559.50) – totalling £3,159.50.
Payments of £50.00 by way of donations from the Christmas Fund were **Approved** to each of The Brownies, The Coffee Shop and the Playgroup: £ 150.00
- d) **Management of PC Finances** (banking arrangements): This remains work in progress.

41/23 Levens Community Project

- a) **Levens Community Project Advisory Group (PAG):** Cllr Mason presented a brief report from a meeting held on 05 September. The draft Minutes had been circulated. Main items of report were:
- i. **Sale of Plots:** The proposed sale of Plot 1 at Cotes is the subject of on-going discussion after the prospective purchaser has raised issues about the extent of the building footprint. There has been no interest in Plot 3 at Church Road.
 - ii. **Underhill:** The Project is awaiting a quote from ENW for the electricity supply. This will be interrogated when received to see if other options exist. Councillors agreed with the proposal that Alisdair Muir's report on sustainable heating options should be completed. It was also **Agreed** to approve the quote from United Utilities for the water connection: £6,386.00.
 - iii. **New Village Hall - Works:** Work on the rear (eastern) remains close to completion. Routes from the Church to the new hall are being considered. Sales of stone continue. A quote from Spatial Data for a revised topographical survey was **Approved** in the sum of £200.00 + VAT.
 - iv. **Tender Packs:** Tender packs for both Underhill and the new Village Hall are virtually complete and Tony Hills hopes to submit them to PAG before its next meeting.
 - v. **VAT Report:** The Accountants have said that they will support the Project in the question of Zero Rating the new village hall even if it remains in Parish Council ownership until completion. They have still not however responded to several further queries raised.
 - vi. **Community Ownership Fund:** The Clerk and others from PAG will look at the on-line tutorials available to assist in the completion of Fund applications at:
<https://mycommunity.org.uk/community-ownership-fund>.
 - vii. **Investment of Cash Reserves:**
The Clerk reported that £1,300,000 has been transferred from the Project current account into the interest-bearing Parish Council deposit account (used to hold Savin Brow Quarry Charity reserves of about £950). The reconciled balance in the Project current account (at 23 August) is £41,879.70 and existing commitments total £36,451.12. After payment, there will be a working balance of £5,428.48 in the Project current account and no payments (other than minor bank charges) leave the current account without Parish Council approval. The transfer back of funds from the deposit account to the current account will be required in due course, but for the sake of further interest accrual, a transfer-back is probably not required for a further month – and if a payment does become necessary, this can be done relatively simply by securing two signatures on a letter of transfer to the bank. It was **Agreed** not to transfer Project funds from the deposit account to the current account for the time being – but to give authorisation in principle to do so if and when required.

b) **Payments:** The following payments recommended by PAG were **Approved:**

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| i. J. Thacker & Sons Ltd: (supported by a Certificate of Interim Payment from T Hills): | |
| Perimeter walls: | £32,725.62 |
| ii. Spatial Data: Update topographical survey (when invoiced): | £ 240.00 |
| iii. Transfer of VAT refunds received by Project but due to the Parish Council: | £ 1,057.49 |
| iv. Transfer Capacity Grant received into Project account in respect of Co-ordinator salary but paid by and due to the PC for the period 2022 – March 2023: | £ 2,428.01 |

42/23 Planning Applications:

- a) **The Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule on 09 September had been circulated and were noted. The following applications were discussed:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Status
43	SL/2022/0074	Land to NE Levens La.	Footpath	It was Agreed to request a further extension as the matter was still actively work in progress and subject to the finalisation of a plan and associated design.
14	SL/2023/0552	Bridlecroft, Levens (Mr S Mackay)	Agricultural building	Agreed to submit a note of No Objection
15	SL/2023/0579	Levens View, High Sampool	Storage building	Agreed to advise Development Management that the PC shares its concerns

b) **Other Planning Matters:**

- i. **Shepherd's Mill:** It was Agreed to write to Cllr. Battye in her capacity as a W&F Councillor to seek their further engagement.

43/23 Levens Charities:

a) Levens Charity

- i. Fund Values: Councillors noted the up-to-date fund values and other assets of (approximately) £161,187.
- ii. Levens Playing Fields – application for grant: It was **Agreed** to seek a meeting with representatives of the applicants to clarify a number of points associated with the application.
- iii. It is anticipated that the next meeting of the Appointed Trustees will be held before the PC meeting in November when the half-yearly figures are reviewed, and any grant applications determined. An update Report will be brought to the November meeting of the Parish Council as Sole Trustee.

- b) Savin Brow Quarry Charity: The Clerk had nothing of significance to report.

44/23 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** After discussion on current traffic initiatives, it was **Agreed** that Cllr. Battye will follow-up issues around the school and centre of the village with Helen Karaaslan. Representatives on the A590 Group will continue to monitor progress and report back.

b) **Woodland Management:**

- i. Cllr Mason reported that Electricity NorthWest have advised him that they intend to carry out a significant amount of work on trees alongside Hutton Lane at Cotes over the weekend of 25-26th November to clear the electricity lines of overhanging trees. This will involve some power outage on the Sunday. There will still be a number of trees that the PC will need to take down as representing a risk to the cables. The Forestry Commission has advised the PC that it should apply for a felling licence to enable necessary thinning over a five-year period. It was **Agreed** that Parishioners should be advised of this proposed work by ENW and the reasons for it through various channels of communication. The end result will be advantageous to the structure of the woodland and encourage a greater diversity of wildlife, but this will need clear explanation. The matter will be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.
- ii. Councillors also noted that Pam Capstick has written to request further attention to the trees adjoining her property and that she had sourced a qualified operative who could do the work. It was **Agreed** to obtain a quote from him for the work.
- iii. A letter from Mr R Sissons had drawn attention to overhanging trees on Lowgate between the Church and the Hare and Hounds. It was **Agreed** that with the exception of a small group towards the Hare and Hounds the trees in question were not on Parish Council land and that Mr Sissons be advised accordingly.
- iv. The Clerk advised that the Woodland Management Plan was due for a 5-year review and that the Tree Health and Safety Report was also in need of updating. It was **Agreed** that the Clerk would advise on how this work should be undertaken.

c) Parish Assets and Land:

- i. Brigsteer Road – Securing quotes for the northern boundary wall remains work in progress.
- ii. Jubilee Orchard – There were no new updates to report.
- iii. Benches: Cllr. Willacy was thanked for the renovations of the benches at Nelson Square and it was noted that Ernie Foster’s memorial bench had been re-stained and varnished.

d) Handyman: It was noted that the candidate interviewed by Cllrs Burrow and Holmes had not got the insurance or payroll set-up to take on the work. It was **Agreed** to follow-up other leads.

e) Website: The chairman will speak with Tom Hecht to discuss the operation of the web team.

f) Levens Greening Campaign: Cllr Battye reported that plans for the Autumn programme were well underway and events would include presentations by Growing Well, CAfS and the Lowland Curlew Recovery Programme

g) Parish Emergency Plan: The Clerk confirmed that he is making arrangements through a Doodle Poll for a new date for the Group to meet. In response to Cllr. Battye, it was confirmed that the Group had not taken on winter gritting as an issue, but that the topic should be discussed in the context of supporting vulnerable residents.

45/23 Correspondence: The following items were noted:

- a) It was **Agreed** not to confirm engagement with the D-Day 80 beacon event at this stage.
- b) Concerns about a disruption in green bin collections were noted. Cllr Battye acknowledged that there had been a glitch in the service but that problems had now been resolved.

46/23 Future Agenda Items:

- a) Woodland Management – ENW work at Cotes and Plan reviews
- b) Newsletter content
- c) The 20mph speed limit
- d) Webteam

47/23 Date of the Next Meeting: The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday, 10 October 2023 in the Levens Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 10.09 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....