

# Levens Parish Council

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held in the Levens Methodist Church on the 08 February 2022.**

**Present:** Cllrs R. Atfield, S. Bagot, J. Battye, H. Burrow, K. Holmes, R. Mason, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy; County Cllr. J. Bland, M. R. Curry (Clerk) and 3 members of the public.

**102/21 Apologies for Absence:** None.

**103/21 Declarations of interest:** In relation to Item 11(i) of the Agenda, Cllrs. Atfield and Holmes declared that they were Trustees of the Levens Playing Fields Charity and Cllr. Battye declared that she was Secretary to the Levens Playing Fields Committee.

**104/21 Minutes:** It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 11 January 2022 as a true record.

**105/21 Public Participation:**

- a) Two residents from Lowgate requested to know if and when the Parish Council was going to manage its woodland immediately adjacent to their property. They had previously written expressing concern about branches which were regularly falling onto their property and they were concerned about possible damage as a result of high winds. Some ash trees were exhibiting die-back and there was a dense growth of sycamore saplings. The Chairman confirmed that the PC had a Management Plan and was currently looking for suitably qualified contractors to commence work. The residents confirmed that they had a suitably qualified person who would do the work free of charge and undertook to refer him to the Parish Council.
- b) A resident of Underhill asked if a planning application in relation to The Langdales was to be considered as part of the Agenda and expressed concerns about the application to vary a condition relating to an existing hedge. The Chairman confirmed that the application was on the Agenda.

**106/21 Reports:**

**a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:**

- i. Cllr. Rogerson reported on a meeting of CALC's District Association held remotely by Teams on 27 January. It had been a short Agenda with little to report other than the election of a new Chairman and the questions about the structure of CALC as a result of local government reorganisation.
- ii. Cllr. Battye reported on a Phase 1 Greening Campaign meeting with CAfS on 31 January. The meeting had reviewed Phase One of the Greening Campaign, the ideas generated by it, and what to do next (including whether to take up the offer of Phase Two of the Greening Campaign). Councillors **Agreed** with her recommendation to await further detail on the content of the Phase 2 initiative before signing up to it. The Chairman commented on several greening issues:
  - Hugh Connor had asked the PC to bear the South Lakeland Orchard Group in mind when developing the proposed Jubilee Orchard and consider using locally sourced heritage trees;
  - He had also noted spraying of roadside weeds with what he assumed was herbicide. It was not known whether this was a CCC or SLDC initiative, but Cllr Holmes confirmed that the chemical concerned would become immediately inert when reaching ground with no foliage. Cllr. Battye commented that spraying of private property had occurred and that she had had an abusive response when she had challenged an operative. Councillors agreed with Cllr Mason that anyone negatively affected should complain to the relevant Council.
- iii. The Chairman reported on a (remote) National Cycle Network Consultation Event hosted by Sustrans immediately prior to this PC meeting.<sup>1</sup> Consultation was on proposals relating to NCR 700 including around Levens Bridge and Holme Bottom. Implications had included

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<sup>1</sup> At the meeting held on 08 March, this Minute was corrected to read "...immediately prior to the Project meeting held on 01 February 2022."

Sustrans requirement to raise the height of the parapet on Levens Bridge. They are now reverting to the Dept. of Transport for funding to explore planning issues in more detail. Further discussion was deferred till later in the Agenda.

- b) Police:** There was no report from the Police though the Clerk reported that the local Newsletter recently circulated contained no matters directly relevant to Levens. Concern was expressed as Councillors were aware of several incidents locally. A Councillor then reported that he had been burgled recently whilst on holiday. Cllr Bagot said that she was aware of a local meeting shortly which PCSO Park would attend and said she would raise concerns with her. Councillors expressed sympathy to the affected Councillor for his recent misfortune.
- c) District Councillor:** Cllr. Holmes reported as follows:
- i. Further concern had been reported to him about building work at 46 Greengate and he had spoken to SLDC's Enforcement Officer who had undertaken to inspect. Developments at Whitbarrow Grove were also to be considered.
  - ii. He has been working closely with local issues relating to Local Government Reorganisation which continues to progress.
  - iii. On discussion about a small piece of land owned by SLDC at the Green, it was confirmed that the Parish Council would not make a bid for ownership.
- d) County Councillor:** Cllr. Bland reported as follows:
- i. Resurfacing work had taken place between Brigsteer and Lord's Plain and from there towards Levens.
  - ii. Cllr. Willacy observed that Cumbria had been identified as the worst English County for pot-holes and in response Cllr Burrow asked if the very poor condition of High Street would be addressed. Cllr Bland confirmed that he would get it added to the Schedule for repair. Cllr Holmes asked fellow Councillors to note that there is a new Highways Defect Reporting process and it was agreed to publicise this as widely as possible.

#### 107/21 Finance

- a) Receipts:** The following receipt for the period 01-31 January 2022 was noted:
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|---|---------|
| 13/01/2022: NorthWest Electricity – Annual wayleave payment | £119.61 |
|---|---------|
- b) Payments:** The following payments were **Approved**:
- i. M R Curry – Salary January 2022: (PC £274.38; Project £186.21; Charity £14.05  
Mileage £13.00 £487.64
  - ii. Direct 365: Defibrillator supplies – 2 sets pads + battery: £292.80
  - iii. L&K Group: Room hire costs A590 Group meeting: £ 60.00
  - iv. Levens Methodist Church: Room hire PC meetings: £105.00
  - v. Mitchinsons (Accountants) revision of fees for the administration of payroll to £120.00 per year was noted and approved.
- c) Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** The reconciled net bank balance of £18,139.68 at 31 January was noted. Councillors also noted that after deduction of ring-fenced funds the underlying balance available to the Parish Council is £12,419.52.
- d) To note the submission of the Precept Bid for 2022-23:** Councillors noted the figure of £13,960.05 submitted as the requirement for Precept for 2022-23.
- e) Internal Auditor:** The appointment of Jean Airey for the 2021-22 internal audit was **Approved**.
- f) Management of PC Finances:**
- i. The Chairman reported that following an unsatisfactory situation with HSBC in relation to on-line banking he had made enquiries of other banks. The most promising response had come from NatWest who still offer Community Accounts and can set up a digital system requiring 2 signatories. It was **Agreed** that the Chairman should continue his enquiries.
  - ii. The Clerk reported that Dodd & Co had sent notice of the HMRC initiative 'Making Tax Digital' (MTD) which will affect the submission of VAT returns in particular. It was **Agreed** that Dodd & Co should be instructed to make VAT Returns of behalf of the Parish Council for the time being.

#### 108/21 Levens Community Project

- a) Levens Community Project Advisory Group (PAG):** Cllr. Mason reported that a meeting of PAG had been held on 01 February. Key items noted from that meeting were:
- b) Sale of Plots:** Sales of the two plots currently under offer at Cotes were progressing. Plot 1 (Cotes) and Plot 3 (Church Hill) remain on the market.

- c) **Underhill:** Tim Thacker continues to make good progress on infrastructure works.
- d) **New Village Hall:**
- i. Boundary Walls: Our Party Wall consultant is negotiating a revised Party Wall Agreement with a surveyor appointed by a neighbour occupying an adjoining property.
  - ii. Two quotes for the building of the boundary walls as designed by Paul Snape have been received. A third is awaited.
- e) **Finance:** Councillors noted that a bank reconciliation as of 23 January showed Project funds-in-hand of £1,037,446.89p.

#### 109/21 Schedule of Planning Applications:

- a) Councillors noted updates since the last meeting and new applications:

PC Ref	Location	Proposal	Application No.	PC View	Outcome
30	2 Meadow Wood	New front porch (lawful development)	SL/2021/0944	No Objection	Granted 26/01/2022
33	31 Greengate	Extension, dormer windows & garage	SL/2021/0999	No Objection	ACON 11/01/2022
34	20 The Green	Single storey front porch extension	SL/2021/1139	No Objection	ACON 10/01/2022
35	Plot 2 Church Hill	Variation of approved plans for new dwelling	SL/2021/1155	No Objection	Awaiting decision
36	Birks, Levens	Single storey rear extension	SL/2021/1118	No Objection	ACON 21/01/2022
37	4 Lowgate	Demolition and new dwelling	SL/2021/2022	No Objection	Awaiting decision
38	Plot 1, Church Hill	New dwelling & associated works	SL/2021/1206	No Objection	Awaiting decision
39	Lords Plain Farm LA8 8EN	Re-concrete agricultural yard	7/2021/6032 (LDNPA)	No Objection	ACON 16/02/2022
40	1 Low Levens	Alterations	SL/2022/0034	No Objection	Awaiting decision
41	1 Whitbarrow Grove	Garden room etc	SL/2021/0771	No Objection	ACON 19/01/2022
42	The Langdales	Variation of conditions	SL/2022/0067	Awaiting validation	
43	Land on Levens La & at Levens Bridge	Footpath on Levens La and cycle path at Levens Bridge area	SL/2022/0074	See discussion minuted below	
44	Lakesway Holiday Homes	Variation of conditions	SL/2022/0091	Make representations	No decision

**Application SL/2022/0074** (footpath on Levens Lane and a cycle path in the Levens Bridge area): There was much discussion on this item and the consensus opinion of the Council was that it had never agreed a direct involvement in the provision of a cycle path. Nor had it understood that the two initiatives were being linked - and even less that it should be expected to contribute to the creation and / or maintenance of the cycle path. There was discussion about the specifications for the cycle path and its route and concern that Sustrans has not committed financial resources. Cllr Bland was asked if CCC has funding for both initiatives and replied that it had - but that there could now be a shortfall as a result on an increase in the estimates of cost. The linking of the two initiatives in one planning application was viewed, in hindsight, with regret – although the discounting of costs for planning applications from a PC was acknowledged. It was conceded that the current position is better than having no progress at all and **Agreed** to let the planning application run for the sake of securing the path on Levens Lane and wait for further meetings to determine the course of progress in respect of the cycle path.

- b) **Other Planning Matters for consideration:** Cllr Burrow reported that the sale of the old Carpet Shop appears to be progressing.

**110/21 Parish Council Newsletter:** It was **Agreed** to produce a Spring edition for distribution in late February. In addition to the Chairman's Report, items would include: a review of the Christmas event; the new website; woodland management; an update on the Project; publicisation of the Annual Parish Meeting; the Platinum Jubilee celebrations; B4RN and the Levens Charity. The Clerk undertook to coordinate items and arrange for printing and delivery.

**111/21 Annual Parish Meeting 2022:** Councillors acknowledged the legal requirement to hold a Village Meeting once a year and that this can no longer be delivered remotely. It was therefore **Agreed** to hold a much reduced event to comply with the legal requirements including a Chairman's Report, a

financial report, a Project update and a public forum. The meeting will be held immediately before the Parish Council Meeting at 7pm on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March at the Methodist Church. The Parish Council will seek to host a more general gathering of local organisations later in the year. It was **Agreed** to circulate village organisations and representatives with these arrangements.

#### **112/21 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda**

- a) **Traffic Management:** There had been no response from Arnside on the request for details of their scheme. The Clerk will continue to request a response.
- b) **Levens Lane Footpath and cycle-path:** This had been discussed at item 109/21. The refund of £730 planning fees to the Clerk who had facilitated payment was **Ratified**. Payments to Damson Design (Design consultancy - £1,846.96) and Treescapes Consultancy (tree survey £1,002.48) were **Approved**. Cllr Bland confirmed that these costs would be repaid to the PC by Cumbria County Council.
- c) **Parish and Other Land**
  - i. **Brigsteer Road site:** The grant application to Friends of the Lake District is ready for re-submission.
  - ii. **Registration of Land at Cotes:** The Clerk reported that there was as yet no response from HMLR.
  - iii. **Parish Hedge, Hutton Lane:** Cllr. Mason confirmed that work to remove the hedge would be undertaken on a date in very early March to be confirmed. The Clerk will advise Mr Stainton.
- d) **Woodland Management:** Cllr Mason confirmed that his contact will commence the felling identified in the Tree Health Report. Cllr Holmes will coordinate this work.
- e) **South Westmorland Village Maintenance Association:** The winding-up of the Association was noted. Cllr Burrow expressed the need for a contingency plan and general awareness of the situation.
- f) **Parish Council Website:** Tom Hecht continues to work up new content frameworks and designs which is being uploaded onto the draft site. Following his recommendation, it was **Agreed** to authorise him to terminate the arrangement with Treble3.
- g) **Platinum Jubilee:** Councillors were aware of a number of other initiatives being planned in the village and confirmed that it would host the Beacon on 2 June and create the Jubilee Orchard on its land at Underhill. It suggested that the village Facebook page might encourage event organisers to upload details of their events for general awareness and coordination.
- h) **Electric Car Charging Points:** Cllr Holmes confirmed that there is no development to report.
- i) **Playing Fields Pump Track:** Cllr Battye reported that plans are being reviewed and that a meeting was to be held soon with Dallam Tower Estate.
- j) **The Greening Campaign:** Already discussed at Item 106/21(ii).
- k) **B4RN:** Cllr. Rogerson reported that 276 properties were now live with a target of 296 by the end of February. The Community Project will liaise with B4RN about connections for the plots at Cotes.

**113/21 Correspondence:** Items on the schedule of correspondence had been circulated were noted with no comment. Cllr Holmes reported that David Sykes will retire from SLDC in May and the Council recorded its thanks to him for his support.

**114/21 Future Agenda Items:** Items confirmed for the next Agenda were:

- i. Contingencies for adverse winter weather

**115/21 Date of the Next Meeting:** The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held at 7.30p.m. on Tuesday 08 March 2022 in the Methodist Church to be preceded by the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.00p.m.

The meeting closed at 10.20 p.m.

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