

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 10 October 2023 in Levens Methodist Church at commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. R. Atfield (Chairman), S. Bagot, H. Burrow, R. Mason, D. Rogerson,

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

48/23 Apologies for Absence: Apologies had been received from Cllrs. J. Battye, K. Holmes & M. Willacy

49/23 Declarations of Interest: Cllr. Mason declared an interest in Item 7(b)(i) and Cllr. Atfield did so in relation to any matters concerning Levens Playing Fields.

50/23 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 12 September 2023 as a true record.

51/23 Public Participation: There being no members of the public present, no matters were raised.

52/23 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- i. Cllrs. noted a written report from Cllr. J. Battye on matters relating to Levens Playing Fields in which she reported progress on governance matters, the establishment of a working group to organise social events, fundraising, a new noticeboard and work on the community garden.
- ii. Cllr. Atfield had attended the CALC AGM as an on-line participant on 30 September. CALC has become a limited company with effect from 01 October. There will be a slight increase in membership fees for the 2024-25 year. In addition to the normal business, guests speakers from the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy gave an update on progress with the initiative.

b) Westmorland & Furness Council (W&FC): Cllr Battye's written report covered the following:

- i. The Health and Adult Overview and Scrutiny Committee is focusing on pressures on systems and what can be done to ease these.
- ii. The Locality Board has funding for Highways and Cllr. Battye is trying to get the Levens Lane footpath onto the list of work.
- iii. A small amount of funding has been made available for the possible reinstatement of local bus services which have recently ceased, as well as other local transport initiatives such as Village and Rural Wheels.
- iv. 20 mph speed limit: A new initiative to make it easier for local communities to secure 20 mph speed limits is getting underway. The role of Parish Councils in supporting such schemes and mobilising public consultation is an essential part of the process. Further information on the process will be made available.
- v. Winter gritting – Cllr. Battye is trying to secure plans for road gritting in rural areas. Cllrs. noted that an important breakthrough is to get clarification on whether local contractors who are not on the list of approved contractors can provide a gritting service and it was **Agreed** to write to Cllr. Battye with this question.

c) Police: Recent editions of Focus had been circulated on 05 October, but there had been no items of specific relevance to Levens. The 'Streetsafe' initiative recently publicised by W&FC on behalf of Cumbria Constabulary was noted.

53/23 Finance

a) Receipts 01 September – 30 September 2023: Cllrs noted the following receipts:

- i) 15/09/2023: Refund of salary from Levens Community Project (paid by PC): £ 2,428.01
- ii) 15/09/2023: Refund of VAT from Levens Community Project due to PC: £ 1,057.49

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

- i) M R Curry: Salary September – (PC: £419.24; Project: £244.09;

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| Charity: £85.68; Expenses £14.80; Mileage £5.40) | £ 769.21 |
| ii) HMRC: PAYE etc Months 4-6 (July-September): | £ 438.83 iii) |
| M Richardson: Assistance with External Audit: | £ 62.25 iv) |
| Moore: External Audit fee: | £ 1,008.00 v) |
| Cllr. H. Burrow: Refund expenses – Christmas decorations: | £ 28.24 |
- c) **Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** Councillors noted the reconciled bank balance of £18,935.10p held by the Parish Council on 30 September 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. The Christmas Fund will be reduced by three donations of £50 each to local organisations (The Brownies, The Coffee Shop and the Playgroup - previously agreed at Minute 40/23.c) and by the refund to Cllr. Burrow approved for payment at 53/23(b)(v) above.
- d) **Management of PC Finances** (banking arrangements): It was **Agreed** to leave matters as they are for the time being.

54/23 Levens Community Project

- a) **Levens Community Project Advisory Group (PAG):** Cllr Mason presented a brief report from a meeting held on 03 October. Main items of report were:
- i. **Sale of Plots:** Armitstead Barnett have reported that the purchaser is wanting to progress at the agreed sale price of £165,000, but has asked for two trees, which have ash die back, to be removed. These will be done as part of Electricity NorthWest (ENW) work on trees in late November. A further request for storage on-site has been declined for the time being. There has been no interest in Plot 3 at Church Road.
 - ii. **Underhill:**
 - Tony Hills (TH) has now received the information needed from Alistair Muir to complete the tender package. Draft Tender Packs were circulated just prior to the meeting. There is a need for a minor variation to the planning application which was **Agreed** by the PC. Members of PAG are to submit comments on the draft tender packs by 31 October.
 - Supply of services: Local contacts with ENW are looking into this for the best price to involve ducts via PC land and a quote for this route is still awaited. The quote has been accepted from United Utilities for supply of water to the site.
 - iii. **New Village Hall - Works:**
 - Boundary walls and other groundworks – cam stones will be put on the top of the back wall in the next couple of weeks. The site can then be tidied up and any surplus stone removed to Bridlecroft.
 - Pedestrian access between the Churchyard and the village hall: various options had been discussed and the recommendations in Tony's revised plans were **Approved** by the PC.
 - Electricity supply: ENW have notified 15 December 2023 as the proposed date to complete the work. Tim Thacker will need to complete our part of the trench by that date.
 - Water supply: TH has submitted a new application to get a quote from United Utilities. iv.

Sale of stone: Further income is due from purchasers. Remaining stone will be removed to Bridlecroft. It was noted that stone is being stored free of charge by Cllr. R Mason at Bridlecroft. He has recently incurred minor expenses in respect of storage and Councillors **Agreed** in principle to reimburse costs when submitted in the region of £60 (actual figure to be confirmed by email).
 - v. **VAT Report:** The Accountants have finally responded and new caseworkers have been allocated following the retirement of Steve Ferrie. The Clerk will commence liaison with the new Team on outstanding queries.
 - vi. **Community Ownership Fund:** The Clerk confirmed that following acceptance of the Expression of Interest, the full application can be made at any time before March 2025. Work on revising the Business Plan is ongoing and needs to include costs from the invitations to tender. vii.
- Financial Position and Investment of Cash Reserves:** At 23 September, funds in the Project Current account were £8,028.45 after deduction of un-presented cheques. Project funds held on deposit amounted to £1,305,055.28 which included £5,055.28 interest (currently at 2.02%) since the funds were placed on deposit. The Clerk reported his disappointment that the arrangement agreed with HSBC for the seamless transfer of funds between the current account and the deposit account

appeared to have failed at the last transaction and he was making enquiries to clarify the current position.

- b) **Payments:** The following payments recommended by PAG were **Approved**:
- i. R. Mason & Son: expenses incurred in relation to the storage of stone; approved in principle in the region of £60.00 (final figure to be confirmed).

55/23 Planning Applications:

- a) **Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule on 09 October had been circulated and were noted as follows:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Status
43	SL/2022/0074	Levens Lane	Footpath	Period for submission of details extended to 31/03/24
11	SL/2023/0608	Moorcroft Cottage	Discharge of conditions	Non-material – No Objection
12	SL/2023/0563	Bridge End Garage	Discharge of Conditions	Non-material – No Objection
13	SL/2023/0580	Plot 2, Church Road	Variation of Conditions	No Objection submitted 28/08/23
14	SL/2023/0552	Bridlecroft, Levens	Storage Building	No Objection - ACON 28/09/23
15	SL/2023/0579	Levens View, High Sampool	Storage Building	Withdrawn 14/09/23 after reservations expressed by W&FC supported by PC
16	SL/2023/0673 SL/2023/0674	7, Dove Cottages, Sizergh	Garden Room	Applications deemed invalid by W&FC

b) **Other Planning Matters:**

- i. **Shepherd's Mill:** The Clerk reported that he had written to Cllr. Battye as requested and that she had taken up the matter with officers at W&FC in late September. Correspondence is still going on to confirm W&FC's role in determining matters relating to this issue. Cllr. Burrow has spoken to the Valuation Office and will liaise with Cllr Battye on her return. It was **Agreed** that the Parish Council should also write to W&FC to provide them with further information.

56/23 Levens Charities: The Clerk confirmed that the Appointed Trustees are to meet with Levens Playing Fields on 17 October in relation to their application for a grant. A meeting of the Appointed Trustees to consider the half-yearly position will be held immediately after.

57/23 Newsletter: It was confirmed that the Newsletter needed to be printed and delivered to Levens by 25 October. Items for inclusion will include: The Christmas event, woodland management, the Community Project, information on No Cold Calling; reporting highways defects to W&FC, the possible 20 m.p.h. zone and other matters.

58/23 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

a) **Levens Traffic Management:**

- i) Traffic calming related to the school: Email correspondence with Helen Karaaslan during late September had confirmed that Highways were trying to rectify the faulty flashing school warning light and were also working on proposals for other traffic calming measures. It was hoped the latter might be available for consideration later in October.
- ii) Main Street: It was **Agreed** to ask Cllr. Battye to add the need for re-surfacing of Main Street to the list of work requiring attention.
- iii) Road Closures – lower Church Road: It was noted that a section of lower Church Road would be closed for three days from 17 October to facilitate work by United Utilities. Also the A5074 in the Lyth Valley will be closed from 09 October for three weeks for essential repairs. These notifications have been placed on the local Facebook Group for rapid distribution.
- iv) Revised bus service: It was noted that an improved bus service had been introduced though new timetables had not yet been publicised. It was **Agreed** to print off the new timetable, laminate and display at the bus stops.

b) Woodland Management:

- i) It was **Agreed** that the work intended by ENW along Hutton Lane and Underhill should be publicised within the local community via the Parish Council Newsletter and on the website. Publicity will stress that that the work to be done is required by ENW, but also that the Parish Council will take advantage of the work to undertake additional thinning and removal of dead or dying ash. An application for thinning work has been accepted by the Forestry Commission and it is expected that a Felling Licence will be issued following consultation with local officers.
- ii) It was **Agreed** that quotes should be procured for a review of the Tree Health and Safety Report submitted in (December 2020). Recommendations will form the basis for further work on other sites owned by the Parish Council. iii. The contractor sourced by Pam Capstick has been in touch and will view the work adjacent to her property when he is next in the vicinity and provide a quote. iv. The Clerk confirmed that he will submit recommendations on how a mid-term review of the Woodland Management Plan should be constructed in such a way as to provide a basis for future woodland management work additional to Health and Safety priorities.

c) Parish Assets and Land:

- i. Brigsteer Road – Securing quotes for the northern boundary wall remains work in progress.
 - ii. Jubilee Orchard – It was **Agreed** to prepare an Expression of Interest to the Community Ownership Fund to try to secure grant support for the initiative.
- d) Handyman:** Cllr. Burrow has provided the details of a contractor who might be prepared to take on work in Levens. The Clerk will enquire.
- e) Website:** The Chairman confirmed that he had written to Tom Hecht to discuss the operation of the web team. A reply was received as the meeting was being held which the Chairman will review.
- f) Levens Greening Campaign:** Cllr Batty's written report confirmed that the Autumn programme is underway. Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) will talk to the group (Retrofit Made Easy) on 19 October and the Lowland Curlew Recovery Group are booked for the 13 November. Both meetings will be in the Methodist Hall to commence at 7.30 pm.
- g) Parish Emergency Plan:** The Clerk confirmed that a meeting was scheduled for 25 October. A key requirement will be to appoint a Chair to lead on the initiative.

59/23 Correspondence: Items on the Schedule of Correspondence were noted and particularly:

- a) 05/10/2023: A note from Trading Standards confirming Levens as a No Cold Calling Zone and offering publicity resources for local display;
- b) 05/10/2023: A request from a lobbying group called Zero Hour to take various actions in respect of the Climate and Ecology Bill presently before Parliament. It was **Agreed** that notwithstanding the views of individual members, or the *prima facie* virtue of a cause, Levens Parish Council is apolitical and does not engage in political activism. As a result, it was **Agreed** not to respond to the proposed actions.

60/23 Future Agenda Items:

- a) The Christmas Event – update on arrangements.

61/23 Date of the Next Meeting: The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday, 14 November 2023 in the Levens Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....

Filename: October Minutes.docx
Directory: /Users/tom/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail
Downloads/1200BE0F-44BE-4FD1-94E2-C1FFF6385E93
Template: /Users/tom/Library/Group Containers/UBF8T346G9.Office/User
Content.localized/Templates.localized/Normal.dotm
Title:
Subject:
Author: Clerk
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 27/11/2023 23:01:00
Change Number: 7
Last Saved On: 27/11/2023 23:17:00
Last Saved By: Levens Parish Council
Total Editing Time: 49 Minutes
Last Printed On: 03/01/2024 18:32:00
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 4
Number of Words: 2,354
Number of Characters: 12,469 (approx.)