

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 11 October 2022 in Levens Methodist Church at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. R. Atfield (Chairman), H. Burrow, K. Holmes (and as District Cllr.), R. Mason, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy; M. R. Curry (Clerk) and 4 members of the public.

Before commencement of the formal meeting, the Chairman asked the Parish Council to take a few moments to consider the respective contributions to the life of the Parish given by Stephen Read and Ted Capstick, both of whom had recently passed away. Councillors fell silent in respect to their memories.

59/22 Apologies for Absence: Written apologies with reasons for absence been received from Cllrs. S. Bagot and J. Battye. Cllr. Holmes tendered apologies on behalf of Cllr. Bland and PCSO J. Park.

60/22 Declarations of interest: None.

61/22 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 13 September 2022 as a true record.

62/22 Public Participation: A resident of Hutton Lane raised a question about a planning application relating to Ivy Cottage. It was agreed that this matter would be discussed under Agenda item 8(a) (Planning Schedule).

63/22 Reports:

- a) **Reports from Councillors attending meetings:** No reports were submitted.
- b) **Police:** No report had been received from the Police.
- c) **District Councillor:** Cllr. Holmes reported that there was little of local relevance to report from SLDC. The Council is working hard to ensure an effective transition to the new Westmorland and Furness Council. He had however raised concerns within Planning about Shepherd's Mill (The Old Carpet Shop) and will report any outcomes.
- d) **Shadow Councillor, Westmorland & Furness Council:** In the absence of Cllr. Battye there was no detailed report on the development of the new Council. Cllr. Holmes confirmed that recruitment to senior Officer positions was ongoing.
- e) **County Councillor:** On behalf of Cllr Bland, Cllr. Holmes confirmed that there were no specific matters of local relevance to report.

64/22 Finance

- a) **Receipts 1 Sept - 30 Sept:** The Clerk confirmed the following receipts for the period:
 - i. 16/09/2022: VAT Refund £ 288.70
 - ii. 16/09/2022: Salary Refund from Project £1,599.78
- b) **Payments:** The following payments were **Approved:**
 - i. M R Curry: Salary: September 2022: (PC: £320.09; Project £132.93; Charity £2.86; Mileage £31.20) £ 487.08
 - ii. HMRC: PAYE/NI Mths 4-6 £ 356.25
 - iii. Levens Methodist Church: Room Hire April-Sept @ £15 £ 75.00
 - iv. PKF llp: Annual audit fee (including recoverable costs relating to the Project) £1,560.00
 - v. Cllr. H. Burrow: Out of pocket expenses, Xmas decorations £ 18.78
- c) **Room Hire, Levens Methodist Church:** The Clerk drew Council's attention to the new room hire rate of £20 per future meeting proposed by the Methodist Church. After discussion, Cllr Willacy proposed that meetings should continue to be held in the main room; Cllr Holmes seconded and this was **Agreed** unanimously.
- d) **Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** The reconciled bank balance of £25,470.79 at 30 September 2022 was noted. Councillors also noted an updated summary of ring-fenced funds with the only external ring-fenced sum being £4,534.97 held on behalf of Cumbria County Council for local capital projects.
- e) **6-Month Budget Review:** The Clerk confirmed that he had conducted a 6-month budget review to 30 September 2022. Income showed a positive variance of £3,600 above budget, being the refund of planning fees paid by the Parish Council in relation to proposed works on Levens Lane and Levens Bridge. Other receipts were in line with budget. Expenditure was currently

under-budget, but a number of expenses remained to be paid in the second half of the year, including the annual audit fee and insurance premium. The Clerk's assessment that budget performance was not in exception was accepted and his verbal report **Approved**.

- f) **2021/22 Audit:** The Clerk reported that the external audit had been successfully concluded and that the Auditor's Certificate confirmed that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return evidenced performance that was in accordance with proper practices. The Auditor had raised one matter which did not affect this conclusion, but which should be brought to the attention of the Parish Council. This was:

"The Internal Auditor has drawn attention to weaknesses in relation to displaying old public rights notice on the new website. The smaller authority must ensure that action is taken to address this area of weakness in a timely manner."

The Clerk confirmed that he had provided evidence that the Public Rights Notice had been properly displayed on the website at the time during which Public Rights could be exercised, but had inadvertently been omitted as a document during the transition from the old website to the new one. Councillors accepted the Clerk's explanation that this omission had been an inadvertent omission stemming from the transition process.

- g) **Insurance Provider:** The Clerk reported on further work with Zurich Municipal which had included an update of values on the Asset Register. Taking this into account together with the general terms of the overall policy the Clerk recommended:

- i. That Zurich Municipal should be appointed insurance provider to the Council
- ii. That the Council elect to enter a 3-year Long Term Agreement for an annual premium of £420.49

These recommendations were **Agreed** and the annual payment of **£420.49** for 2022-23 was **Approved**.

- h) **Parish Council ICT Requirements:** The Clerk reported that he had had discussions with an ICT consultant who was prepared to make recommendations on the most appropriate ICT solutions for the Parish Council. He would also advise on whether there was a cost-effective joint package that might also support the ICT needs of Helsington and Crosthwaite. Cllr. Holmes reported that he had received clearance to use his Members' budget and offer a grant of £1,000 as a contribution to the overall costs of such a package. The Clerk confirmed that a full recommendation was still work in progress. Some Councillors offered support in principle for a joint package, but the Chairman stated that for security reasons he would prefer Levens to retain a stand-alone system. It was **Agreed** that the Clerk should continue to work on options and report back.

- i) **Management of PC Finances** (banking arrangements): The Chairman reported that he had made further enquiries of both Lloyds and NatWest. There were contra-indications against the latter as at least one signatory had to be an account holder in their own right. Councillors were in general agreement that investigations with Lloyds should be pursued.

65/22 Levens Community Project

- a) **Levens Community Project Advisory Group:** Cllr Mason presented a brief report from the meeting held on 04 October. Main items of report were:
- i. **Sale of Plots:** The prospective sale of Plot 1, Cotes, has fallen-through due to a break in sale lower down the conveyancing chain. Armitstead-Barnett had confirmed that there is still demand for building plots despite the current economic situation. The property is now back on the market at the figure of £175,000 as **Agreed** by Councillors in earlier email correspondence. The prospective purchaser of Plot 3 Church Hill is still interested and the Project awaits options from Aptus for dealing with the overhead electricity cable to understand whether it can offer a meaningful discount on the current sale price. Cllr Mason said that the sale of these two plots, though important for the Project, is not at this stage having a detrimental effect on progress.
 - ii. **Underhill and the New Village Hall:** Work on facing the retaining wall at Underhill is near completion. Tenders for the construction phase are ready to go out pending further investigation into optimum energy requirements and in particular the integration of renewable energy into the scheme. Discussions on this have been held with Mr Stuart Richardson, a local electrical specialist, who has been approached and his advice is

awaited. Completion of the Underhill work will allow work to re-start on the Village Hall boundary walls in the near future.

- iii. **Electricity Supply at the New Village Hall:** Cllr Mason reported that further investigations into supply options are continuing and that Mr Richardson is looking into this question also. Tenders are ready to go out pending resolution of this matter.
- iv. **The Supply of Accountancy Services:** The formal appointment of Armstrong Watson as previously agreed will be made following the conclusion of Quarter 2 VAT matters under the current financial framework.

b) Payments: To approve payments as recommended by PAG: No payments have been referred for approval by the Project Advisory Group.

66/22 Planning Applications:

a) The Schedule of Planning Applications: Updates to the Schedule at 10 October were noted including a review of those cases not yet determined. Applications discussed were:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	PC View	Decision
9	SL/2022/0560	Ivy Cottage, Hutton La. LA8 8PF	Various proposals – see b)i below		
16	SL/2022/0866	11 Greengate Cres., LA8 8QA	Lawful Dev. Cert. for change of render	To confirm what is the change proposed	

b) Other Planning Matters:

- i. **Ivy Cottage, off Hutton Lane:** The Chairman invited comment from a local resident who asked the Council what it knew about the case. Councillors noted that it had been highlighted in the previous Schedule, but that there had been scant information at that stage. Subsequently a planning application number was confirmed, but there was still confusion about the status of the application. Councillors also heard that there were implications around possible restrictive covenants, the proposed demolition of historic fabric and proposals to replace a structure which had not had planning permission. Councillors advised the resident to write to Development Management with a strong statement of his concerns and also to Levens Hall on the question of restrictive covenants. In the meantime it was **Agreed** that the Clerk should write to SLDC to request clarification on the status and progress of this application.
- ii. **Shepherd’s Mill:** The Clerk confirmed that as instructed at the September meeting he had delivered a letter from the Parish Council to Mr Bowker’s address on the 29 September. Subsequently he and several Councillors had received telephone calls from Mr Bowker robustly defending his actions. On 30 September, the Clerk had submitted a request to SLDC to take action under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and on 06 October he had written to the Valuation Office in Ulverston to request that the de-rated status of the property be investigated in the light of recent circumstances. Cllr Holmes also confirmed that he had raised the matter direct with Development Management. The outcomes of these various lines of enquiry are yet to be received.
- iii. **The Langdales:** The Clerk reported that a call to the Planning Inspectorate had confirmed that the case is in the system pending a hearing, but no date had been set.

67/22 Community Emergency Plan: The Clerk confirmed that, following an initial meeting of the Parish Council Working Group, he had written to an agreed list of representatives from different organisations in the Parish asking for participation in the preparation of a Community Emergency Plan (CEP). Several responses had been received, but some were awaited, on receipt of which he would make recommendations to the PC Working Group for a first meeting of this representative Group. Cllr Holmes confirmed that he had registered for attendance at the Cumbria Flood and Coast Forum to be held in Kendal on 20 October.

68/22 Christmas Event: Cllr. Burrow reported that plans for a Christmas event were developing and was pleased to report that local residents Sylvia and Steve Roberts had offered a 30 foot tree as the centrepiece. It was proposed that decorations of red, white and blue bows would offer a tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen. Further details for the event were under preparation.

69/22 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** It was confirmed that the Parish Council should write formally and directly to CCC to request a meeting to move forward on options.
- b) **Levens Lane Footpath:** Cllr Bland is continuing to progress options for this initiative and Cllr Mason confirmed his view that there is a good chance that this will happen.
- c) **Parish Noticeboard:** The Clerk had continued research into suppliers, but was not yet in a position to make a specific recommendation. Cllr Burrow asked for specifications in order to explore the possibility of having one made locally.
- d) **Woodland Management:** Cllr. Mason undertook to try to contact Mr Russell Boow to see what capacity he might have to undertake agreed woodland work.
- e) **Parish and Other Land:**
 - i. Maintenance Services: There were as yet no individuals identified who might accept a role of handyman for the village.
 - ii. Brigsteer Road site: The Clerk thanked Cllr Willacy for providing specifications for the walling required along the northern boundary wall. Cllr Mason offered to check out if the wallers at the Underhill site might provide a quote for the work to put to Friends of the Lake District in support of an application for Landscape Grant.
 - iii. Dead tree at Cotes: it was **Agreed** to ask N W Electricity to remove this tree during other work planned for the locality.
 - iv. Street light out on Hutton Lane – this had been reported and repaired.
- f) **Levens Greening Campaign:** In the absence of Cllr. Battye it was agreed to wait until the November meeting for a formal update. Cllrs praised Cllr. Battye for the hard work that she had put into the Great Big Green Weekend over the 23/25 September. Cllr Battye had previously requested a slot on the November Agenda to discuss SLDCs recently issued Climate Toolkit for Parish Councils.

70/22 Correspondence: Items on the Schedule of Correspondence were noted. It was **Agreed** to sponsor the costs of hiring the Institute as a venue for a training course for WebTeam volunteers. Cllr Burrow reported on the receipt of a new batch of No Cold Calling signs, but the question had arisen concerning the logo that should be put onto them (SLDC or Westmorland & Furness Council). The Chairman **Agreed** to discuss this with Cllr. Battye for advice.

71/22 Items for Local Media: Following discussion on what and how Parish Council news might get higher profile, particularly in the Westmorland Gazette, the Chairman **Agreed** to discuss mechanisms with Naomi Capstick.
In relation to Parish Council news, Councillors noted that the next edition of the Newsletter would need to be printed and delivered by the 27th October at the latest. The Clerk **Agreed** to coordinate content and get it to the printers in good time for delivery.

72/22 Future Agenda Items: Items on the current Agenda will be followed up; otherwise, the following items were noted:
a) Charity Report
b) Climate Change Toolkit

73/22 Date of the Next Meeting: The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday, 08 November 2022 to be held in the Levens Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 9.59 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date:.....