

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 11 July 2023 in Levens Methodist Church at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. R. Atfield (Chairman), S. Bagot, J. Battye (and as W&FC Councillor), K. Holmes, R. Mason, D. Rogerson.

In Attendance: M. R. Curry (Clerk) and 3 members of the public.

22/23 Apologies for Absence: Apologies had been received from Cllrs. H. Burrow and M. Willacy

23/23 Declarations of Interest: None declared.

24/23 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 13 June 2023 as a true record.

25/23 Public Participation:

- a) Cllr. S. Bavin (W&FC) confirmed that a meeting has been called to discuss the Landscape Recovery Scheme under the Government's Environmental Land Management Programme. The meeting is on Monday 31 July in Witherslack Village Hall at 7.30 p.m. and will be chaired by John Geldard. Several Councillors indicated that they would attend.
- b) Mr J. Morris reported that NorthWest Electricity and BT continued to make visits to poles in the vicinity of his property, but the outcomes remain unclear. He has continued to do localised strimming work on Parish Council land on a voluntary basis but advised that there was too much for him to do on the land opposite the new village hall site. He had noted that the Parish Council hedge around Causeway Farm needed cutting back.
- c) Mr F. Parle raised several questions about traffic management, including the increase in cars parking on pavements and any progress with a 20-mph limit in the village. Cllrs noted the concerns about pavement parking, and it was **Agreed** that the Clerk should raise this with PCSO Park. On speed limits, Cllr. Battye responded that W&FC is developing a policy and will publicise proposals in the Autumn. It is likely that this will include a local consultation process leading to community-based decisions on whether to elect for 20 mph limits.

26/23 Reports:

- a) **Reports from Councillors attending meetings:** Cllr. Battye reported that the Levens Playing Fields Marquee Dance had been held on 01 July which had been a very successful event and raised over £6,000. Other events had been held including an Art Trail and a Dark Skies meeting. The latter had raised questions about the future management of footpath lighting and progress on this will be monitored.
- b) **Westmorland & Furness Council:** Cllr Battye reported as follows:
 - i. She had received an allocation of £1,000 to be applied within her Ward and is seeking ways of how best this can be used.
 - ii. The Locality Board is to meet in the following week and Cllr. Battye is promoting the Levens Lane footpath as a priority.
 - iii. Cllr. Battye is actively involved with a number of Committees including as Chair of the Health and Adults Scrutiny Committee which is looking at social care arrangements for the coming winter, support for carers and ways to combat the lack of dentist provision locally.
- c) **Police:** Recent editions of Focus had been circulated but there had been no items of specific relevance to Levens. Cllr. Battye reported that she had met PCSO Park by chance in the village recently. Jayne confirmed that PCSOs are visiting regularly and that she had recently been involved with scrap metal and cold callers locally. She stressed the importance of reporting issues on 101. Cllr. Rogerson referenced the success of the local Facebook page in alerting residents rapidly to cold calling activity. Cllr. Holmes mentioned several accidents on the A590 recently and said that it was likely that the next meeting of the A590 Working Group had not yet been confirmed, but it was likely that it would be in the back-end.

27/23 Finance

- a) **Receipts 01 May – 30 June 2023:** Cllrs noted receipts totalling £802.11 on the bank reconciliation (previously circulated) which included a £600 salary refund from Levens Charity and a number of land and allotment rent receipts.

- b) Payments Required:** The following payments were **Approved**:
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| i) M R Curry: Salary - June 2023: (PC: £306.00; Project: £395.16; Charity £6.13; Expenses: £23.07; Mileage £10.80) | £ 741.16 |
| ii) HMRC: PAYE etc Q1 2023-24: | £ 509.40 |
| iii) Printing Plus: Summer Newsletter | £ 154.30 |
| iv) Malcolm Richardson: Accountancy Assistance (AGAR) | £ 96.75 |
| v) Cllr S. Bagot: Expenses, Annual Parish Meeting | £ 24.00 |
| vi) Noticeboards Online: Balance due, new noticeboard | £ 1,400.00 |
- c) Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** Councillors noted the reconciled bank balance of £20,173.67 held by the Parish Council on 30 June 2023. They also noted a statement of ring-fenced funds showing ring fences in favour of woodland management (£1,600.00) and for the Christmas event (£1,559.50) – totalling £3,159.50.
- d) Management of PC Finances** (banking arrangements): This remains work in progress.

28/23 Levens Community Project

- a) Levens Community Project Advisory Group (PAG):** Cllr Mason presented a brief report from a meeting held on 04 June. Main items of report were:
- i. **Sale of Plots:** The proposed sale of Plot 1 at Cotes has been referred to our solicitors for progress. Armitstead Barnett have updated the sales particulars for Plot 3 at Church Road in an effort to boost interest.
 - ii. **New Village Hall - Works:** Work on the rear (eastern) wall is nearing completion. Sales of stone are progressing with around £5,500 sold to date.
 - iii. **New Village Hall - Electricity Supply:** The quotation from NorthWest Electricity was agreed by email, formally accepted and the cheque sent. Tony Hills is chasing up the agreement with United Utilities for water supply. There had been a meeting on 10 July with Alistair Muir (renewable energy consultant) to identify options for renewable energy supply both at Underhill and the village hall. His report is now awaited.
 - iv. **Tender Packs:** These remain on-hold pending confirmation of utility requirements. Revised plans for the renewal of planning consent for the Institute have been completed but submission is on hold for the time being.
 - v. **VAT Report:** The Clerk advised that the report completed by Armstrong Watson had been considered in depth by PAG and that he had written back requesting clarification on several points. A response was awaited.
 - vi. **Community Ownership Fund:** Councillors were pleased to note that the Expression of Interest had been accepted meaning that an application could be made to the Fund. The Clerk was in contact with Carol Last at W&FC to explore sources of advice that might be available.
 - vii. **Investment of Cash Reserves:** The Clerk confirmed that on 07 June £1,200,000 had been transferred from the non-interest-bearing HSBC Project account to an existing Parish Council HSBC deposit account realising interest currently at around 1.5%. It was accepted that this is not a high rate of return but is at least providing interest until such time as a higher rate might be found. It was **Agreed** to transfer a further £100,000 from the Project account to the deposit account, though the Project account will now require careful monitoring to maintain sufficient funds for day-to-day transactions.
- b) Payments:** The following payments recommended by PAG were **Approved**:
- i. J. Thacker & Sons Ltd: (previously approved in principle (see Minute Ref: 20/23(a)(vi)) but now supported by a Certificate of Interim Payment from T Hills): Perimeter walls: £27,654.40
 - ii. Electricity North West: **Ratification** of the email-approved payment for supply: £18,258.68
 - iii. Armstrong Watson: VAT Report £ 1,500.00

29/23 Planning Applications:

- a) The Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule on 10 July had been circulated and were noted. The following application was noted:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Status
8.	SL/2023/0471	5 Greengate LA8 8NF	Single storey side extension	Agreed to submit No Objection

- b) Other Planning Matters:**
- i. **Levens Lane:** It was noted that this application remains live until 27 September but that as yet, no additional information confirming route and design has been supplied to the planning

- authority enabling them to reach a decision. It was **Agreed** that Cllr. Battye and the Chairman would meet on-site with Cllr. Mason to review possible options and create a revised proposal.
- ii. **Shepherd's Mill:** Follow-up with the Valuation Office remains in hand.

30/23 Parish Tour: The written review of the meeting previously circulated was noted. It was **Agreed:**

- a) To write to residents who have secured road mirrors to Parish Council trees with nails to remove them.
- b) To ask PCSO Park to look at an on-road parking issue in the vicinity of the Hare and Hounds and to look at the incidence of pavement parking in the village and take action if necessary.

31/23 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** For Levens Lane, See 29/23(b)(i) above. It was noted that the flashing school lights on Bell Hill still aren't working. Doubt was expressed as to whether they were ever actually programmed in. It was **Agreed** that this matter should be referred back to W&FC.
- b) **Parish Noticeboard:** Councillors were pleased to note that installation was now complete.
- c) **Woodland Management:** Cllr Mason had discussed the work on Lowgate with Russell Boow again and he had promised to do the work in the following week. It was **Agreed** that if it were not done, consideration should be given to paying Scott Thwaites to do the work. It was further **Agreed** to prompt Electricity NW about the need for thinning of branches close to power lines in several places.
- d) **Parish and Other Land:**
 - i. Maintenance Services: The job description had been emailed out to a candidate who had responded to the advert in the Parish Council Newsletter but there had been no feedback as yet. Scott Thwaites will do local strimming work at various locations in the meantime.
 - ii. Brigsteer Road Site: Securing quotations for the walling remains work in progress.
 - iii. The Jubilee Orchard: Cllr. Mason is getting a quote for the costs of work on the boundary wall and will look at possible funding pots for this work.
- e) **Summer Newsletter:** The Chairman reported that this had been received and distributed. He thanked the Clerk for collating the content.
- f) **Levens Greening Campaign:** Cllr Battye reported on a successful programme of events during the Great Big Green Week including a Dark Skies meeting, advice on composting and waste recycling and other activities. CAfS have produced a 'Solar Made Easy' initiative for households and there seems to be renewed interest in the provision of an electric car charging point. The Group is now preparing its programme for future events, including a presentation on local initiatives to support the breeding curlew population.
- g) **Parish Emergency Plan:** There has been no further development, but the Clerk will try to set up a meeting.

32/23 Correspondence: The following items were raised:

- a) It was **Agreed** to invite Cllr Peter Thornton of W&FC to give his presentation to the Parish Council in the Autumn.
- b) It was noted with disappointment that an allotment holder had written to give up half of his plot. Efforts would be made to re-let it.
- c) The Chairman had received a letter enquiring whether the village defibrillator was registered. The consensus was that it is, but he will check.
- d) Cllr Rogerson raised the possibility of a small remuneration for Tom Hecht's work on the Parish webpage. This will be dealt with at the next meeting.
- e) It was noted that the bus shelter at the bottom of Levens Lane had some graffiti on it. It was **Agreed** to note this and monitor any worsening of it.

33/23 Future Agenda Items: Items on the current Agenda will be followed up.

34/23 Date of the Next Meeting: The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday, 12 September 2023 in the Levens Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 9.28 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....