

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 14 March 2023 in Levens Methodist Church at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. R. Atfield (Chairman), S. Bagot, J. Battye (and as Shadow Councillor Westmorland & Furness Council [W&FC]), H. Burrow, K. Holmes (and as SLDC District Cllr.), R. Mason, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy.

In Attendance: County Councillor J. Bland; W&FC Councillor S. Bavin; M. R. Curry (Clerk) and 1 member of the public.

Before the commencement of the formal Agenda, the Chairman reminded Councillors that this was the last meeting to be attended by representatives of Cumbria County Council and South Lakeland District Council, both of which were to be subsumed within the new Westmorland and Furness Council from the 01 April 2023. He paid thanks to Cllrs. Bland (CCC) and Holmes (SLDC) for their work with the Parish Council and noted that Cllr Holmes would remain as a Member as a Parish Councillor in his own right.

121/22 Apologies for Absence: None.

122/22 Declarations of Interest: Cllrs Battye, Holmes and Atfield declared interests in any matters relating to the Playing Fields.

123/22 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 14 February 2023 as a true record.

124/22 Public Participation: No matters were raised.

125/22 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- i. Cllr Holmes reported on a recent meeting of the A590 Working Group where it had been noted that progress towards planned improvements continues. Funding remains the issue, however and whilst minor improvements will continue, it is unlikely that sufficient funding for the major proposals, such as a roundabout at Gilpin Bridge, will be available in the near future.
- ii. Cllr. Bagot reported on a meeting of Institute Trustees on 22 February. The validity of the 2016 Section 106 Agreement had been raised but the Clerk had subsequently addressed this issue and confirmed that the 2016 Agreement remains in force. John Wood is to stand down as Treasurer and there will be an Open Meeting on 16 May.

b) Police: No report had been received from the Police and it was acknowledged that future liaison will most likely rest on the periodic Newsletter 'In Focus'.

c) District Councillor: Cllr. Holmes reported that SLDC continues its focus on the transition process to the new W&FC, but continues as far as possible to deliver business as usual. He reported on an incident of fly-tipping / littering involving some scores of empty bottles at Sampool. He had alerted John Barwise at SLDC who had arranged for the collection of the bulk of the bottles whilst a local resident had dealt with the rest.

d) Shadow Councillor, W&FC: Cllr Battye reported that with just two weeks to go, current work was focused on the transition and confirming final staff allocations. A balanced budget for 2023-24 had been approved and the Annual Council Meeting would be held on 20 April. Cllr. Battye is on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

e) County Councillor: Cllr. Bland thanked the Chairman for his kind words earlier and said that it had been a pleasure to serve the area of over 30 years. He had been unable to attend the latest meeting of the A590 Group but did confirm that there had been a reduction in the number of serious accidents over recent years. He was aware of issues with local roads, but given the immediacy of the changeover, had found it difficult to speak to Highways Officers on the subject. He was sure that the new Council would pick these matters up.

126/22 Finance

a) Receipts 01 February – 28 February 2023: Cllrs noted the following receipt:

SLDC: Grant for ICT equipment via Cllr. Holmes Member Budget £ 1,000.00

b) Payments Required: The following payments were approved:

- i) M R Curry – Salary: February 2023: (PC: £293.76; Project £340.78; Homeworking Annual Allowance 240.00; Mileage £16.20): £ 890.87
- ii) Fieldgate Data Services Ltd - ICT package (inc. VAT): £ 1,788.00
- iii) Alan G Fawcett - Verge cutting (Brigsteer etc) via Cllr Bland CCC: £ 120.00

iv) Tom Hecht - Annual Webhosting paid to Squarespace:	£ 216.00
v) Noticeboard Online – Deposit, new noticeboard:	£ 1,000.00
vi) Cllr. K. Holmes – Expenses A590 meeting (Room Hire)	£ 19.70
vii) Printing Plus - Spring Newsletter:	£ 154.30

c) Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds: Councillors noted the gross reconciled bank balance of £17,051.13 held by the Parish Council on 28 February 2023. They also noted a statement of ring-fenced funds showing a balance of £2,443.77 due to Cumbria County Council, leaving a net balance of PC funds of £14,607.36 (of which there were ring fences in favour of woodland management of £2,500.00 and for the Christmas event of £1,016.52). Cllr. Bland confirmed that he would clear the CCC balance by the end of the financial year.

d) Management of PC Finances (banking arrangements): The Chairman has had further correspondence with Lloyds, but this remains work in progress. It was noted that correspondence had been received from Levens Playing Fields requesting consideration of an annual grant and the Chairman also referred to the annual grant to the Methodist Church for hosting the Levens Post Office. After discussion, the following grants were approved:

i) Levens Playing Fields – Annual Grant:	£ 1,600.00
ii) Levens Methodist Church – Hosting the Levens Post Office:	£ 700.00

127/22 Levens Community Project

- a) Levens Community Project Advisory Group (PAG):** Cllr Mason presented a brief report from a meeting held on 07 March. Main items of report were:
- i. **Sale of Plots:** Offers on Plots 1 at Cotes (still on the open market) and 3 at Church Hill (withdrawn for the time being) remain under negotiation via Armitstead Barnett.
 - ii. **Works - New Village Hall:** Work on the perimeter walls at the new Village Hall site is nearing completion and is looking very good.
 - iii. **Electricity Supply at the New Village Hall:** The Project has confirmed (through Mr Hal Bagot, Churchwarden) that its preferred route is through the Church ground. The appointment of a Surveyor by the Church is now underway, and the Project will ask for an indication of likely costs when appointed.
 - iv. **Tender Packs:** These remain on-hold pending confirmation of utility requirements. PAG considered kitchen design proposals at its last meeting and is to meet with the prospective supplier by Zoom to discuss detailed requirements later in the month.
 - v. **The Institute:** Cllr. Mason confirmed that Tony Hills is updating the plans for the Institute for the renewal of planning consent and produced updated drawings. There was discussion about the extension of the porch and also the window bars on the western elevation. It was **Agreed** that Cllr Mason would discuss these details with Tony H.
 - vi. **Community Housing Fund:** The Project awaits proposed amendments to the Funding Agreement to account for the offer of an extra £46,000 for the Institute. A claim for Capacity Grant will be submitted by the end of the month.
 - vii. **Accountancy Services:** The Clerk reported that the accountants have now submitted the VAT Return for Quarter 3.
 - viii. **Investment of Cash Reserves:** Armstrong Watson have made recommendations for the investment of Project funds to generate income. This would involve splitting the deposit held at HSBC into packages of £80,000 for investment with individual banks offering interest. This is under consideration, but in the meantime a PAG member with banking connections is looking at the transfer of funds within HSBC from the current account to an interest-bearing deposit account – something which has so far proven very difficult to achieve.

b) Payments: To Ratify payments as recommended by PAG:

Councillors noted the Clerk's report to PAG that the reconciled bank balance on 23 February showed funds-in-hand of £1,407,728.11. Following recommendation from the Project Advisory Group the following payments were approved:

- Tony Hills Studio Ltd (formerly Damson Design) - Tender packs & energy advice: £1,440.00
- Tony Hills Studio Ltd – new planning application for the Institute: £3,600.00

128/22 Planning Applications:

- a) The Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule on 14 March had been circulated and were noted. The following updates were noted:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Status
43	SL/2022/0074	Land to the NE of Levens Lane	Levens La Footpath	Not yet determined
8	SL/2022/0938	Plot 2 Church Road	Variation of Plans	ACON 24/02/2023
14	SL/2022/0768	5-6 The Stables, Levens Hall	New interior glass door – no objection submitted	Not yet determined
18	SL/2022/0950	Bridge End Garage	Major alterations – no objection submitted	Not yet determined
19	SL/2022/0995	Whinthwaite Hose	Building works – no objection submitted	Not yet determined
22	SL/2022/1075	Levens Hall	Repairs to west elevation – no objection submitted	Not yet determined
25	SL/2023/0122	Levens Hall	Erection of open fronted gardener's store	Comments by 15 March No Objection

b) Other Planning Matters:

- i. **Shepherd's Mill:** Follow-up on the S.165 and with the Valuation Office are in hand.
- ii. **Levens Lane:** It was questioned why the current application needed to be withdrawn (at the Planning Officer's request) and **Agreed** to discuss with Tony Hills with a view to keeping it live.

129/22 The Annual Parish Meeting: Arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting on 21 March are in hand including the provision of refreshments. Posters have been put up in various locations and the formal Notice and Agenda is ready for publication. Of 19 organisations approached, 10 have confirmed attendance so far.

130/22 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** Cllr. Burrow reported on a positive meeting with Helen Karaaslan of County Highways on 01 March. The flashing lights at the school have been installed (it was noted that one is not working). Highways will look at the possibility of laying zig zag lines at the school entrance, consider parking at the Playing Fields entrance as this remains an issue and whether amendments to the school wall on Church Road might help create additional parking for teachers. The meeting had noted that the facility for teachers to park at the Church to ease traffic on Church Road was not being used to its potential. The employment of a 'lollipop' person was mooted, but not felt to be easy to implement. On wider issues there was reference to the recent accident involving a cyclist and a pedestrian and it was **Agreed** to procure "Cyclists Slow Down" signs from Sustrans. The Clerk confirmed that following the theft of the SID in Brigsteer, the Levens SIDs were insured.
- b) **Levens Lane Footpath:** This matter had already been discussed under Item 128/22(b)(ii)
- c) **Parish Noticeboard:** The final design had been agreed by email and following enquiry of the suppliers it was agreed to go with the proposed panel celebrating the Coronation of King Charles III. The Clerk will confirm the order.
- d) **Woodland Management:** The Clerk confirmed that he had written to several residents who had made representations about trees committing to progress. The Chairman commented that whilst he was aware that the Parish Council was looking for a regular operative with appropriate qualifications and insurance, he felt that at this stage it was important to make progress through commercial contractors. Cllr. Bagot reported that the Church had just had three trees felled at a cost of £480 and gave the name of the contractor - who is known to Cllr. Holmes (Woodland Officer). It was **Agreed** that Cllr Holmes would arrange to meet with this contractor and get the specific items referred to the Parish Council dealt with.
- e) **Parish and Other Land:**
 - i. **Maintenance Services:** The job description had been agreed and a meeting with a potential handy-person, possibly by Zoom, is to be set up.
 - ii. **Brigsteer Road Site:** Councillors congratulated John Morris for his excellent work on strimming and tidying the site. Cllr. Mason reported that the stone-waller from the new Village Hall site will give a price for the work on the northern boundary wall, for which funds in Levens Charity had been earmarked from the Londis Grant via the Village Shop.
 - iii. **Gritting:** Cllr Battye reported that W&FC are likely to review gritting requirements and priorities during the summer.
 - iv. **HMLR:** The Clerk is still awaiting a response to his query about the alleged defective cheque that had been cashed in December 2021.
 - v. **The Jubilee Orchard:** Cllr. Mason reported that he and Cllr. Willacy had visited the site with Tim Thacker. The biggest cost of setting up the site is likely to be work on the perimeter wall, but Tim could make a start by levelling the site. Cllrs. Mason and Willacy will work up proposals and

costs. In the meantime, interest in the Orchard expressed to Cllr. Bagot by a Group in Grasmere would be turned down as the site is too small for a partnership with them.

- f) **Levens Charities:** The Clerk reported that he is awaiting end of quarter fund values to assist consideration of whether Charity funds could or should be used for the Project.
- g) **Levens Greening Campaign:** Cllr Battye reported that she had had further information on greening initiatives from SLDC which she will present to the Annual Parish Meeting. The Clean River Kent Group will give a presentation in the Village on 24 April. The Greening Group is working up a constitution similar to that used by Levens Good Neighbours.
- h) **Christmas Event:** Cllr. Rogerson reported that net proceeds from the event amounted to £571.76 which had been banked. Cllr. Burrow's proposal to retain £400 for the event fund and to distribute the balance as small grants locally was **Agreed**.
- i) **Parish Emergency Plan:** A doodle poll has identified Friday 31 March as a date for a meeting. The Clerk will confirm a venue.
- j) **Coronation Events:** Cllrs. Bagot and Burrow have bunting etc. for the dressing of the area around the bus-stop and Green. The Playing Fields will be available for a Community Picnic on Sunday May 07, whilst Churches Together have circulated a set of ideas for other events and are working on identifying organisers.
- k) **Spring Newsletter:** The Chairman reported that receipt and distribution had gone smoothly. He thanked the Clerk for working so quickly on much of the content to get it to the printers in time. Councillors **Approved** his request that this note of thanks be recorded in the Minutes.

131/22 Correspondence: Items on the Schedule of Correspondence were noted. A number of these had been dealt with in the meeting but the following were mentioned in particular:

- i) Correspondence from Mr Watson requesting a note of how much the call for donations by B4RN had realised for Levens Charity. The Clerk had confirmed that the current figure stood at £10,813.28 with Gift Aid receipts to add.
- ii) Correspondence from Mr Watson requesting clarification on whether the S106 Agreement signed in 2016 was still valid. The Clerk had confirmed that it was.
- iii) In response to an enquiry from a Parishioner, Cllr. Willacy will deal with repairs needed on the bench at Nelson Square.
- iv) The Chairman referred to an enquiry from Tom Hecht about Newsletter distribution and that this had been answered satisfactorily. It was also **Agreed** to ensure that in future an electronic version of the Newsletter was sent to him / Cllr. Rogerson for the website.
- v) The Chairman also referred to unsubstantiated and untrue allegations made in telephone calls from someone in the village and received by some Parish Councillors.
- vi) Cllr. Bland concluded by confirming that in addition to a recent grant of £1,000 made to the Curlew Recovery Project he was also making grants of £1,000 to Helsington Parish Council towards a replacement SID and £1,443.77 to Underbarrow Parish Council for village improvements. These payments would bring his CCC Project Fund to a nil balance.

132/22 Items for Local Media: Increasing the coverage of local items remains work in progress.

133/22 Future Agenda Items: Items on the current Agenda will be followed up.

134/22 Date of the Next Meeting:

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Tuesday 21 March 2023 in the Institute

The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday, 11 April 2023 in the Levens Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 9.34 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....