

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held remotely by the use of audio-visual technology on 09 March 2021.

Present: Cllrs. R. Atfield (Chairman), S. Bagot, J. Battye, H. Burrow, K. Holmes (and as District Cllr.), D. Rogerson, R. Mason, M. Willacy (co-opted Item 3), M. R. Curry (Clerk); County Cllr. J Bland and 4 members of the public.

The Chairman advised of his understanding that the meeting was being recorded.

86/20 Apologies for Absence: District Cllr. B. Rendell.

87/20 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 09 February 2021 as a true record.

88/20 Parish Vacancies

- a) Current vacancy - co-option: The Chairman confirmed that Parish Councillors had seen and considered the one expression of interest submitted by Mr Mark Willacy. He proposed co-option of Mark Willacy which was seconded by Cllr. Holmes and agreed unanimously. It was **Resolved** to co-opt Mark Willacy as a Parish Councillor and he was welcomed to his seat.

89/20 Declarations of interest:

- a) The Chairman reported that he was shortly to become Treasurer of St John's Church, Levens and declared an interest in Item 10(c)
- b) As an active member of Levens Good Neighbours, Cllr. J. Battye also declared an interest in item 10(c).

90/20 Public Participation: No matters were raised under this item.

91/20 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- i. Cllr. Battye reported that she had attended a presentation by SLDC on its Greening Campaign and had felt it to be a very worthwhile initiative that the Parish Council should consider signing up to. It was **Resolved** to consider this at the April meeting.
 - ii. Cllr. Atfield reported that he had attended a virtual meeting of the South Lakeland District Association of CALC on 04 March. Possible local government reorganisation was discussed and a more detailed meeting on proposals for the creation of one or more unitary authorities was scheduled for 18 March. A consultation on the proposals is live and closes on 19 April. It was **Resolved** to consider this at the April meeting.
- b) Police:** PCSO Jayne Park was welcomed to the meeting by video link. She reported on relatively minor incidents reported recently to the Police, including anti-social behaviour in Levens Park in late February and confirmed that a local incident of dog-snatching had been in Grange, not Levens. Cllr Mason raised the recent incidents of a rough sleeper and deer poaching, but Jayne confirmed that the two were not related. She also reported that whilst she would try to maintain a presence, Community Officers had been advised that they were not required to attend Parish Council meetings. Instead, Jayne's address could be used to report crime and the police would publish a regional newsletter including a link to crimes in the area. They were also issuing SmartWater (a permanent liquid marker) to reduce rural crime. Cllr. Bland said he would take an interest in this development and follow-up if necessary.
 - c) District Councillor:** Cllr Homes confirmed that county and district council elections had been postponed until May 2022 as a result of local government reorganisation in Cumbria, though 5 by-elections are to go ahead in wards not affecting Levens.
 - d) County Councillor:** Cllr. Bland reported that plans to improve the A590 continued to be worked up with a further meeting to be held on 25 May. The aim is to prepare and recommend a complete package to put to Highways England. The collection of water at Levens Bridge by United Utilities has been resolved for the time being, but the issue may well arise again.

92/20 Finance

- a) Receipts:** The following receipts were noted for the period 01 February – 28 February:
10/02/21 D. Rogerson – Christmas Event receipts 864.05

- 15/02/21 Levens Community Project – VAT refund received due to PC 263.65
- b) Payments:** The following payments were **Approved**:
- i) M R Curry Salary Feb 2021: (PC £398.64; Project £325.32; Charity £28.10; Mileage £13.00; 765.06
- c) Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** The reconciled bank balance of £19,377.71 at 28/02/21 was noted as were unrepresented cheques totalling £2,826.20, leaving a net balance of £16,551.51. Councillors also noted the Clerk's report that after deduction of ring-fenced funds held for others (Cumbria CC & B4RN) the underlying balance available to the Parish Council is £7,517.51. This includes £3,041.88 ring-fenced for specific Parish Council purposes (£2,000 for woodland management and £1,041.88 for the Christmas event).
- d) Review of 2020/21 Budget:** The Clerk reported that with a month to go to the close of the financial year a review of budget performance indicated that underlying figures would be in line with budget projections or where there were variances these would be explained at final out-turn and did not give cause for concern.
- e) Banking Arrangements:** The Safeguarding Review requiring details of mandate holders remains work in progress.
- f) Annual Precept 2021-22 and VAT:** The Clerk reported that Precept and Vat matters were up to date.

93/20 Governance Matters

- a) Update and Review of Standing Orders:** The Chairman confirmed that progress had been made, but that a further meeting of the Review Group was required to confirm further matters of detail.
- b) Annual Meeting:** For the avoidance of doubt, the Clerk confirmed that the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Parish Council Meeting were two separate events. The Annual Parish Meeting is a legal requirement and must be held between 01 March and 01 June each year - although Coronavirus Regulations had exempted the requirement for the Meeting in 2020. This is not a meeting of the Parish Council, but by convention, Parish Councils usually arrange and host it. The Coronavirus Regulations expire on 7 May, and therefore an Annual Parish Meeting must be held before 01 June 2021. Furthermore the dispensation to hold remote meetings under the Regulations also expires on 07 May, but restrictions on physical meetings are likely to still be in place. Advice from NALC¹ therefore is that Parish Councils should facilitate remote, but cut-down versions (i.e. i.e. delivering only required reports being from the Chairman and on finances, but excluding a guest speaker and presentations from local organisations) to be held before 07 May. Following discussion it was **Resolved** to hold the Annual Parish Meeting on 13 April at 7.00 p.m. immediately prior to the normal Parish Council meeting. Consideration would be given to whether to hold a meeting later in the year for local organisations to give presentations or to hold that over to the 2022 meeting. The Annual Parish Council Meeting, at which Officers and representatives on external bodies are appointed, must be held in May, but cannot be held before the date of elections which are set for 06 May 2021. The Coronavirus Regulations will have expired and it must therefore be held as a physical meeting which for Levens will take place on 11 May. Arrangements for this meeting will be made as further guidance becomes available.
- c) Local Elections:** As confirmed by Cllr. Holmes, Parish Council elections will be held on 06 May. Notice of Election will be posted on the Parish Noticeboard and website no later than 29 March and nominations must be submitted by 4.00p.m. on Thursday 08 April.

94/20 Levens Community Project

- a) Levens Community Project Committee:** Cllr Mason gave the following report:
- i) Cotes - The three plots have now been placed on the market by Armitstead Barnett at a guide price of £185,000 each.
- ii) Church Hill - Two of the three plots have been placed on the market by Armitstead Barnett at a guide price of £165,000 each and interest has been received. The third plot is subject to an annual occupancy agreement and discussions are being held regarding its future.
- iii) Underhill – work to regularise the title and legal charge is nearing completion after which the S185 Agreement with United Utilities to divert the sewer will be concluded.

¹ NALC – The National Association of Local Councils

- iv) New Village Hall: the tender packs are complete in substance and subject to minor amendments are ready for issue when a number of other matters are concluded - including advice on a mechanism to ensure Zero VAT rating on the build costs.
- v) The Institute – the new Levens Village Hall CIO has been established.
- vi) Governance matters: Members considered a recommendation from the Project Management Committee that as the Project was moving into a new phase with the sale of plots pending, legal matters nearly concluded and the transition of the Institute Charity to a new Levens Village Hall CIO with increased involvement in the structure and administration of the Project, it should become an Advisory Working Group to the Parish Council whilst new management structures unfold. It was **Resolved** to accept this recommendation.

b) To approve payments: The bank balance as at 23 February had been reconciled at £727,913.27p. Following recommendation from the Project Management Committee, invoices **Approved** for payment were:

i) Dodd & Co: Accountancy work 9 months to 31/01/21	£2,400.00
ii) Wrigleys Solicitors: Underhill Title	£3,000.00
iii) Paul Snape: Boundary containment, NVH	£765.00
iv) VAT refund to Parish Council	£320.00
v) G Schofield: Boundary wall design	£3,000.00
vi) Gilmore Stones: Balance due – M&E New Village Hall	£3,936 .00

95/20 Levens Charity: The Secretary to the Charity reported that the Nominated Trustees had met immediately before the meeting of the Parish Council and considered the following:

- i) Secretary’s Report 2019-20: The Nominated Trustees had received the Report for the year ending 31 March 2020 which showed a combined value of funds in Levens Charity of £120,987, down by £4,823 on the value for the end of the previous year as a result of a dip in performance by the COIF Investment Fund. Trustees had been advised that valuations inevitably fluctuate and that the March 2020 value did not give cause for concern in itself. Disposable income as a result of interest accrued set against payments made stood at £10,885. The Savin Brow Quarry cumulative fund was £2,458. It was **Resolved** to accept the recommendation of the Nominated Trustees that the Report be accepted.
- ii) Secretary’s Report 01 April 2020 – 31 December 2020: The Secretary had presented a three quarter performance report for information purposes only. This showed a significant increase in cumulative fund values standing at over £140,000. This peak at mid-term is, however, usual and a better guide will be performance at 31 March 2021. The Secretary drew attention to a letter from the CCLA (Fund Managers) warning about the potential for significant falls in interest rates as a result of the economic outlook post-Covid and it was agreed to monitor this closely.
- iii) Applications for grants: Applications had been received from St John’s Church and the Methodist Church in conjunction with Levens Good Neighbours. It was **Resolved** to accept the recommendations of the Nominated Trustees that additional information to support the applications be requested in both cases.

96/20 Planning Applications: The Schedule of Planning Applications updated to the date of the meeting (annexed to these Minutes) was reviewed. Comments were:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	PC View	Decision
8	SL/2021/0006	12, The Green, Levens	Single storey rear extension	No Objection	ACON 26/02/21
12	SL/2021/0053	Pinfold, Levens	Replace existing dwelling with new 2-storey dwelling	Resolved to Object	
12	To object on the basis that the design and scale of the new building are not appropriate. Also lack of clarity about proximity to the main sewer pipe.				
13	SL/2021/0053	Park View, Force La., Levens	Single storey rear extension	No Objection	
14	TR/2021/042 (TPO)	1, Whitbarrow Grove, Levens	Crown raise chestnut & sycamore	No Objection	
15	SL/2021/0184	Whinthwaite Hse	2-storey, 3-bay garage	No Objection	Discharge of conditions

97/20 Parish Webpage: Cllr. Rogerson reported that he had discussed proposals for the update of the Parish webpage with Mr Tom Hecht who was happy to help on a voluntary basis. It was agreed to set up a Zoom meeting with Mr Hecht to develop initial ideas and in response to local request, to get additional information, including on the Community Project, posted as soon as possible.

98/20 Next Parish Council Newsletter: Cllr. Batty reported that distribution of a hard copy of the Parish Magazine was not proposed in the near future, but that Levens Good Neighbours (LGN) had a newsletter ready to go. It was **Resolved** to prepare a Parish Council Newsletter, to contain a major feature on the Community Project, and circulate this with the LGN Newsletter before the end of March.

99/20 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Traffic Management:** Mr S. Kitchen was invited to express his concerns about the speed of vehicles on Greengate which he said had increased to worrying levels and that the current road markings exacerbated the problem. There was much discussion about what could be done including calming measures, 20's Plenty and the use of SIDs. Cllr. Bland stressed that a coordinated approach was essential and his offer to ask Helen Karaaslan (Team Leader, CCC Highways) to look at possibilities was welcomed.
- b) **Levens Lane Footpath:** Site meetings had been held including Cllrs Mason and Bland with Helen Karaaslan in attendance. Issues including survey requirements, permissions, wayleaves and costs had been considered, with the latter being significant. Options for the entire length were being drawn and would be forwarded to Cllrs Mason and Bagot. Mr Wilson had written to say that his previously reported concerns about safety on Levens Lane were not directly connected to an earlier proposal for a petition on the matter.
- c) **B4RN:** Cllr. Rogerson reported on continued good progress with recent work on Church Road connecting a number of houses to the network. 326 Government vouchers have now been applied for.
- d) **Woodland Management:** Andy Banks's report is still under consideration.
- e) **Parish Land**
 - i. Brigsteer Road site: A risk assessment including consideration of access for the less-abled remains in preparation.
 - ii. Land at Cotes – Responses to HMLR requisitions are still being confirmed.
 - iii. Parish Hedge, Hutton Lane: As agreed at the meeting on 09 February, approximately 15 metres of hedge was removed on Thursday 04 March. An Agreement for an annual rental of the plot will be sent to Mr Stainton.
 - iv. Land, Parking and Allotments - Plans for the renewal of annual agreements are in hand.
- f) **The Old Carpet Shop:** A report from Cllr. Burrow reported that some local interest had been expressed in the property was welcomed.
- g) **Post-box:** Cllr. Rogerson will continue to press for a return of the post box following repair.

100/20 Correspondence: A schedule of correspondence had been circulated. In response to a request from Mr Corrie-Close, it was not felt likely that SLDC would agree to place a dog-waste bin at Lane End Farm and agreed to refer him to the bin at Whitegates. Mr Ritchie's advice about a street lamp not working at Nelson Square would be investigated.

101/20 Future Agenda Items: Items confirmed for the next Agenda were:

- i. SLDCs Greening Campaign
- ii. Local Government Re-organisation - Consultation

102/20 Date of the Next Meeting: The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council is on Tuesday 13 April to be held as a remote meeting unless otherwise publicised and to be preceded by the Annual Parish Meeting.

The meeting closed at 10.15p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date:.....