

# Levens Parish Council

## Annual Parish Meeting 2021

### MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held using audio-visual technology on Tuesday 13 April 2021 at 7:30pm

**Present:** Cllr R. Atfield (Chairman), 6 other Parish Councillors, County Cllr. J. Bland, M. R. Curry (Clerk), and 16 residents.

1. **Introduction:** Cllr. Atfield welcomed participants to the Annual Parish Meeting for 2021. He referred to the introductory note on the Agenda which explained how and why the meeting was being held in the current circumstances and which said:  
“As a result of Coronavirus, the requirement to hold an Annual Parish Meeting was suspended in 2020, but that suspension does not extend to the requirement to hold one between 01 March and 01 June 2021. The dispensation allowing Parish Councils to hold meetings remotely i.e. by the use of audio-visual technology, ends on 7 May 2021, but uncertainty remains over if and how physical meetings can be held after that date. National advice therefore is for those Parish Councils which facilitate Annual Parish Meetings to do so remotely before 7 May.”  
He would make further reference to the situation in his Report at Item 4.
2. **Apologies:** Cllr. H. Burrow
3. **Approval of the Minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting**  
The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2019 had been posted on the Parish Council webpage. Adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Cllr. Bagot and seconded by Cllr. Holmes. It was **Resolved** that the Chairman sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2019 as a true record.
4. **Chairman’s Report**  
Cllr. Atfield’s full Report is attached as part of these Minutes at Annex 1. In them, he acknowledged the strange circumstances under which the 2021 Meeting was being held and the reduced format of the meeting. Nonetheless, there were a number of key items on which he was able to report, a summary of which is as follows:
  - He paid tribute to the Levens Playing Fields Committee in creating a much improved facility and thanked them on behalf of the Parish Council, for their hard work and fundraising;
  - The Parish Council election due on 6 May 2021 is uncontested with 8 nominations from existing Councillors for the 8 available places. He thanked Cllrs. Fitch and Johnston, who had stood-down during the previous term, for their service and welcomed Cllrs. Battye and Willacy as new Councillors in their place. He also thanked District Councillors Brian Rendell and Kevin Holmes and County Councillor Jim Bland for their attendance and advice over the previous two years.
  - He reviewed a number of events and achievements during the previous 2-year period and thanked the following:
    - Cllrs. Helen Burrow and Rachael Johnston for their efforts in creating the successful Christmas event in 2019, repeated in 2020;
    - Cllr. Dave Rogerson and the Parish Clerk for enabling business to continue by the use of technology during the Coronavirus lockdown;
    - Vanessa and Dave and staff at the Village Shop for their efforts to maintain a vital service to villagers during lockdown and thanks also to Levens Good Neighbours for their support to all who needed help over the period;
  - He reported on progress with a number of major village initiatives including the Levens Community Project; efforts to improve traffic management at key points and

the B4RN Scheme. He thanked all those involved for their hard work behind the scenes to maintain these important pieces of work;

- He reported that the Parish Council was updating several aspects of its work including its Standing Orders and the presentation of updates on its webpage;
- Finally, Cllr. Atfield thanked his fellow Councillors for their contribution to the village and Martin Curry, Clerk to the Council, for his continued work on its behalf.

**5. Financial Report: Years Ending 31 March 2019 & 2020 and estimates to March 2021**

The Clerk reported on audited figures for two previous financial years and gave a unaudited update to the Year End March 2021. His detailed Report and accompanying spreadsheet is attached as part of these Minutes at Annex 2. In summary, and having highlighted a number of areas of interest from the audited accounts, he reported that each financial year was completed satisfactorily, though the accounts have become progressively more complex mainly as a result of increased activity within the Levens Community Project. He also reported that the estimates for the year ending 31 March 2021 appeared to be satisfactory giving no cause for an exception report though still subject to internal and external audit. At the conclusion of his Report, the Clerk was thanked for his comprehensive presentation.

**6. Report from The Levens Community Project**

Cllr. Mason gave an update Report on the Project by reference to the article contained in the March 2021 edition of the Parish Council Newsletter which is to be found on the Parish webpage. He indicated that increased information would be available though as the webpage is improved and thanked the Members of the key Working Groups for their support in taking the Project forward.

**7. Public Forum**

The following comments were raised from members of the public:

Mr. Frank Parle raised the issue of speed on Greengate and in the village generally and asked how initiatives to manage speed were progressing. Cllr. Atfield confirmed that Cumbria County Council Highways were conducting speed surveys on Greengate to support possible amendments to traffic priority which would help to reduce speed. Also that discussions were continuing for speed warnings around the school.

Mr. Peter Hoggarth asked whether, following the re-surfacing of Church Road, there was any likelihood of a footpath being provided, particularly at its western end. It was felt that this was unlikely in the face of other priorities, particularly around the school, on Greengate and on Levens Lane to the bus-stop.

Mr. Hugh Connor expressed concern about the loss of trees and woodland habitat around the village He asked the Parish Council to be particularly mindful of planning proposals for work on or the removal of trees with TPOs on them. Cllr. Atfield acknowledged this point, though it was pointed out that much tree loss was as a result of ash die-back.

Mr John Wood drew attention to the fact that during lockdown many of the public noticeboards intended for notices to promote local events and activities had been taken over by businesses advertising their services. Cllr. Atfield acknowledged this concern and agreed that whilst these were primarily public and not Parish Council noticeboards this development should be monitored with a view to rectifying this trend as we emerge from lockdown and increasing numbers of local / village events are reinstated.

The Chairman thanked all present for their attendance.

**The meeting closed at 7.49 p.m.**

Signed.....(Chairman)      Date:

## Chairman's Report April 2021

As you know it is 2 years since we last had an Annual Parish Meeting. You may recall that last year this annual event, scheduled for the 17<sup>th</sup> March, was cancelled just before it was due to take place. As a Parish Council we had to make a decision based on the advice available to us and had to bear in mind the possible consequences to us all if we proceeded with the meeting. I make no apologies for our decision to cancel and as the country went into lockdown just over a week later, I believe we made the right choice.

Traditionally we have used this legally required event to enable us to also enjoy a review of what goes on in our village. In the present circumstances this is not really feasible. However, we have received some reports and as we have said, these will be placed on the website along with the required reports from this meeting. The last 12 months have seen most village activities seriously curtailed – apart from one, and that is the Levens Playing Fields committee who despite all obstacles and challenges, have created a super re-vamped playing facility. On behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank them for all their hard work and fundraising which has resulted in something we can all be proud of and is proving to be very popular.

To report on one year is always challenging but to report for a two year period makes me realise that things do change; but some a bit faster and further than others.

The Parish Council has its full complement of eight councillors and as only eight nominations for a position on the Council have been received, there will be no need for an election and we eight will therefore continue. The “line up” has changed over 24 months with John Fitch offering his resignation last summer for personal reasons and Rachel Johnston stepped down earlier this year because of work pressures in this pandemic. I take this opportunity to thank them for all their work whilst on the Council. Replacement councillors are Janet Battye and Mark Willacy and both bring talents and experience that I feel sure will be useful. Parish Councillor Kevin Holmes is also one of our District Councillors. Brian Rendell – another District Councillor for our area and Jim Bland our County Councillor usually attend our monthly meetings and we thank them for their help and guidance and for the small grants they are sometimes able to give us for specific events which benefit the village.

Over the two years under review the following events have taken place but this is just a sample – not a complete list:

- 2 new litter bins have been sited in the village.
- A ‘cul de sac’/No Through Road sign put up at the entrance to The Green
- The notice board at Cotes has been replaced.
- Various seats and benches around the village have been painted.
- A picnic table installed at the old W.I. site on Brigsteer Road.
- The Royal Mail Post Box on Church Road, by the pub, is away for repair and its return is awaited.

One celebration took place in December 2019 which hopefully will become an annual event. This of course was the arrival of the Christmas Tree on The Green by the shop and the resultant enjoyment from the music, food and outlandish hat decorations. My thanks go to Cllr Helen Burrow and Rachel Johnston for all the hard work they did to get this event off the ground. This year's event was muted in comparison but there were some

exceedingly good 'rainbow stars' and off-shoots. Thanks again to Helen for overseeing this.

Obviously the last 12 months have been different and for their July meeting the Parish Council 'zoomed' into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – all be it a little hesitantly; like a lot of other people and organisations. Thanks must go to our Clerk Martin Curry and Cllr Dave Rogerson for their mastery of this technology. It is not however the same as face to face meetings and an awful lot of physical signing of Minutes will have to be done in the not too distant future hopefully. I will have a new pen ready for the occasion! We have all been affected by new rules and restrictions but I cannot let this opportunity pass without offering the sincere thanks of the Parish Council to Vanessa and Dave and their staff at the shop for all they have done, and continue to do, for our village and residents. They have successfully provided a service second to none irrespective of the prevailing conditions. Our thanks also go to Levens Good Neighbours for the practical help they continue to give; be it replacing a light bulb, collecting prescriptions or, although it has been restricted during lockdown, taking people to various appointments.

The Levens Community Project continues and in the midst of all the visible signs in various locations in the village, the ongoing work 'behind the scenes' so to speak also continues. As I am sure you know; and we certainly did not keep it quiet, Sizergh Fell Quarry was sold by the Parish Council in November 2019 and this was crucial to the project. We will hear a little more later this evening but once again I must give my, and the Parish Council's, grateful thanks to Cllrs Helen Burrow and Roger Mason, and to our Clerk Martin Curry, for all the time and effort they devote to this scheme. We only see a fraction of what actually happens because a sentence in the Minutes could be the result of a series of meetings and hours and hours of discussions with many many people or organisations.

Traffic management in the village is an ongoing subject at Parish Council meetings. You may recall that we had a meeting in the Spring of 2019 with someone from Highways at Cumbria County Council where various subjects and proposals were discussed. Not a lot happened and a new person has taken over the role and she seems to be keen to help. Some of you will have seen cables across Greengate recently in order to record the traffic flow and this happened very quickly after a visit. A footpath down Levens Lane is a regular topic and recent meetings have taken place with one of the land owners and Cumbria County Council. We await any developments. Two parish councillors attend regular meetings, along with other local parishes, with Highways England in order to discuss and influence decisions on the A590 and raise any points that relate to our locations.

Broadband for Rural North, otherwise known as 'B4RN' is not a Parish Council project, but we have contributed a very small amount to this multi thousand pound project. As I said in our recent Newsletter there are bits of orange ducting sprouting up all round the village and as I write this, some is now being buried as the progress of installation continues.

Looking back over my reports, the Old Carpet Shop or Shepherds Mill is a regular feature. We understand that the property is back on the market – digitally – but no For Sale sign has appeared at the premises. I will not go over old ground but suffice it to say that for a sale to take place, the seller must want to sell – it sounds so obvious.....

It was recently pointed out to us that our Standing Orders were not in line with current requirements. We have taken notice and work is underway to reflect the changes needed. A lot of work has been done but a few items remain to be decided.

Having been zoomed into the here and now the Parish Council have realised their existing web page on the Levens Village website is not fit for purpose, looks dated and has some connectivity issues. It is our intention to rectify these shortfalls and have approached an experienced web designer to give us a proposal on how the site can be improved.

Finally – and I can see and hear your sighs of relief – I wish to take this chance once again to thank my fellow councillors for everything they do; for the hours they spend on Council business both at our meetings and on emails in between, but also for the time they spend attending other events which concern us. I personally thank them for allowing me the privilege of being their Chairman. A Parish Council cannot exist without a Clerk and in Martin we are extremely fortunate to have a very capable person who is unfailingly polite, cheerful and from my position as Chairman, a pleasure to work with. On behalf of the Parish Council I therefore wish to ‘thank you’ Martin for all your endeavours, advice and patience – both with the Parish Council and with the Levens Community Project.

Ladies and Gentlemen, viewers and listeners – that is my Report.

Roger Atfield – Chair Levens Parish Council

## LEVENS PARISH - ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - 13 APRIL 2021 FINANCE REPORT 2018-19 & 2019-20

As a result of the pandemic, my Report on Parish Council finances to the Annual Parish Meeting is different in style and content:

Firstly, I am reporting of two sets of audited figures: those for 2018-19 and 2019-20 and providing an unaudited guide to figures for 2020-21. To remind us all, the financial report is based on the last full year of audited figures so, if we had had the Annual Meeting in March of last year i.e. 2020, I would have been reporting on the financial year 2018-19 being the last full set of figures available in March 2020. No meeting was held last year so tonight I will be reporting on 2018-19, 2019-20 and providing an informal report on the unaudited accounts for 2020-21

Secondly, I am reporting by Zoom so we do not have the usual handout of information for you to pick off your chairs. To accommodate that, Cllr Rogerson will shortly display a spreadsheet which I will go through with you. The spreadsheet will be uploaded to the Parish webpage after this meeting.

And thirdly, to comply with audit requirements for an increased level of financial activity the accounts have now moved from an income and expenditure to a receipts and payments basis and there are new and significant elements in the Parish Council finances which make them slightly more complex than usual – I will explain these as we go through the figures.

So, on the spreadsheet, there are some elements that might be familiar to those of you who have attended previous Annual Parish Meetings:

The spreadsheet is divided into three areas: the top third are receipts; the second section is expenditure and the last section are balance sheets (excluding fixed assets) for individual financial years.

The left hand column is figures for 2017-18 which were presented to you at the last Parish Meeting in 2019 and are for information and comparison purposes.

The central columns are the income or cost centres into which receipts and expenditure are allocated and 5 columns labelled A-F are the out-turns and budgets for the year in question.

Starting with Column A – 2018-19 you will see that the receipts totalled £17,287.72 against an income budget for that year of £15,557. This introduces us to one of the new complexities in the accounts as they accommodate the financial impact of the Levens Community Project. It is important to understand a basic principle at this point: At the heart of Parish Council finances is the Precept or grant received from SLDC in order for the PC to conduct its business. Our precept is calculated without reference to the finances of the Project in order to maintain a distinction between 'core' PC business and the cost neutral finances of the Project. The Project is nonetheless a part of PC financing for audit purposes and although it has its own bank account there are, inevitably, financial transactions that require transfers from one account to the other. A good example is with salary payments – Project salary payments (which are reclaimed via external grants) have to be paid via the PC account which runs payroll. In Column A you will see a receipt of £1,840 which is a transfer from the Project to reimburse the PC account for Project salary costs. This amount almost exactly represents the increase in actual income received over the budget for the year. During that year however, there were two further elements of income:

firstly the Project itself generated income into its own account being primarily Capacity Building Grants from the Community Led Housing Fund applied to qualifying Project costs and secondly a deposit of £7,000 from the eventual purchaser of Sizergh Fell Quarry.

And secondly, there was a deposit into the PC account of £12,234 of capital money from Cumbria County Council to be applied to local projects in Levens and surrounding Parishes.

The final income figure for 2018-19 therefore was £43,275.12.

On the expenditure column the same principles of budgeting for PC core business apply giving a budget for the year of £15,557.00 whereas the actual PC expenditure was £25,030. However, the salary payments are higher than budget by approximately £1,900 – payments in respect of the Project offset by the income received as illustrated earlier and half way down is a payment on behalf of the Community Project of £7,200 which was repaid in the following financial year. The sum total of these two elements is in the region of £9,000 which if deducted from the PC expenditure leaves a net total of approximately £16,000 as against the budget of £15,557. Without going into line by line analysis the difference is in relatively minor variances between actuals and budget and no area requires specific explanation.

Again however, beneath the sub-total figure are costs incurred by the Project itself (£4,656.00) and a payment out of the Cumbria ring-fenced capital project fund of £1,000 granted by County Cllr. Bland to Levers Playing Fields.

In the balance sheets the balances against bank reconciliation are shown with the opening balance amended by the receipts and payments to give a closing balance carried forward to 2019-20 of £26,562.48.

The figures for 2019-20 are in Columns C & D and once again you will see that income of £63,229.24 is significantly higher than the budget of £15,606. So if I can first take you to the second line figure of £29,555 monies received there are two key elements here: firstly a Locally Important Projects Award of £20,000 (50% of the total grant) made towards excavation of the village hall site which was paid by bank transfer erroneously into the wrong bank account and is therefore recorded as 'income' to the PC (later paid to the Project) and the repayment of the £7,200 from the Project to the PC as noted previously. There also salary reimbursements included in this sum. The third line is also an anomaly in pure PC finance terms being the receipt of £15,000 on behalf of the B4RN Project as a LIPS grant towards the costs of the distribution cabinet and subsequently paid on. So far therefore, we have £44,566 of unbudgeted income. Money from the Charity as a grant to B4RN and reimbursement of Clerk's allowance accounts for a further £1,000 with further unbudgeted income in the form of receipts from the Christmas event, £200 SLDC Member Grant above budget and VAT refund (later paid into the Project account). Taking into account these variances the net figure for PC 'core' income against budget is approximately £15,663 or very close to budget.

Total income is however inflated by the receipt of £878,997.50 into the Project account the bulk of which is the return from the sale of Sizergh Fell Quarry, augmented by Community Led Housing Fund grants for expenses incurred.

The same pattern is reflected in the expenditure for 2019-20. Here an increase on budget is seen in:

- salary costs of £2,675 (later reclaimed),
- grants paid out of £15,230 (including the onward payment to B4RN for the distribution cabinet);
- £21,040 to the Project being the £20,000 LIPs grant referred to in income
- VAT refund due to the Project and Charity

Taken together these payments account for a total of £40,130 leaving a net balance of £16,438 'core' spend against a budget of £15,606 or an overspend of £832. This is attributable to relatively minor variances in actual expenditure over budget and no area is considered to be of exception.

Additional expenditure however is in relation to the Project £85,024.86 and a further £2,000 grants made at the request of Cllr Bland from the County Council capital fund being a further grant to Levens Playing Fields and a contribution to a Windermere initiative.

Total expenditure for the year £143,593.17 and once again this is seen in the balance sheet for 2019-20 at the foot of the page with a closing balance of £761,966.81 being carried forward to 2020-21.

Although the financial year 2020-21 has now closed the figures presented in Column E are unaudited and do not take account of debtors and creditors, nor of any adjustments required between the current account and the Project. As such they are a snapshot only but an initial review indicates that taking into account the sorts of additional income and expenditure described previously in respect of the Project and capital fund payments, the PC 'core' accounts do not give rise to the need for an exception report.

In conclusion, I may add that the Parish Council is updating the content and layout of its webpage and as a result details of income and expenditure for both the PC and the Project may be found there as well as more regular updates on the Project.

Martin Curry  
Clerk, Levens Parish Council  
13 April 2021

**LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL**

**Summary Receipts and Payments Accounts for Years Ending 2018-19 & 2019-20 + Estimates for 2020-21**

		<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>2017-18</b>	<b>RECEIPTS</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>Budget</b>
13,190.60	Precept and Co. Tax Grant	13,552.07	13,552.00	13,661.36	13,661.36	13,529.00	13,529.00
	Community Project Grants & Other						
1,347.35	Income	1,840.00	0.00	29,566.71	0.00	0.00	0.00
1,758.68	Other Grants	350.00	300.00	15,500.00	300.00	250.00	0.00
813.46	Land & Parking	699.61	605.00	327.11	545.00	612.11	630.00
500.00	Xfer from Levens Charity Account	0.00	500.00	1,525.26	500.00	2,107.05	500.00
	VAT Refund						
4,728.90	2016/17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	VAT Refund						
0.00	2017/18	846.04	600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	VAT Refund						
0.00	2018/19	0.00	0.00	2,325.83	600.00	0.00	0.00
	VAT Refund						
0.00	2019/20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	13,590.00	600.00
	VAT Refund						
0.00	2020/21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	583.65	0.00
85.00	Misc / Other Income	0.00	0.00	322.97	0.00	3,599.05	0.00
<b>22,423.99</b>	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>17,287.72</b>	<b>15,557.00</b>	<b>63,229.24</b>	<b>15,606.36</b>	<b>34,270.86</b>	<b>15,259.00</b>
	Levens Community Project Income	13,753.40	0.00	815,768.26	0.00	129,528.92	0.00
	Cumbria County Council Capital Fund	12,234.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>22,423.99</b>	<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>43,275.12</b>	<b>15,557.00</b>	<b>878,997.50</b>	<b>15,606.36</b>	<b>163,799.78</b>	<b>15,259.00</b>
	<b>PAYMENTS</b>						
5,943.60	Salaries, Travel & Training	7,867.21	5,900.00	8,912.63	6,225.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
750.56	Postage, phone, stationery, printing	798.64	775.00	824.91	800.00	600.00	900.00
453.04	Insurance	391.61	475.00	396.22	392.00	400.00	400.00

350.00	Audit	65.00	300.00	464.70	365.00	1,650.00	500.00
218.28	Subscriptions	225.00	300.00	302.98	250.00	327.00	285.00
145.00	Website Costs	254.00	150.00	193.00	150.00	207.00	200.00
40.46	Room Hire	246.07	160.00	87.00	130.00	131.00	150.00
2,318.22	Grants	2,400.00	3,020.00	17,750.00	2,520.00	2,400.00	2,820.00
30.00	S. 137	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00
1,200.00	Community Project	7,200.00	0.00	21,040.00	0.00	13,231.00	0.00
0.00	Election Costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
45.00	Mtnce & Repairs	1,133.71	1,000.00	2,226.53	1,000.00	118.50	1,000.00
180.00	Woodland, grass cutting, gritting	1,029.46	1,000.00	456.00	1,000.00	1,503.00	1,500.00
915.60	Footway lighting	1,132.07	1,132.00	1,214.36	1,214.36	1,384.00	1,384.00
0.00	Land Registration	0.00	0.00	60.30	125.00	100.00	100.00
0.00	Allotment Rent	315.00	315.00	315.00	315.00	315.00	315.00
0.00	Defibrillator	0.00	0.00	219.48	90.00	0.00	150.00
2,095.50	Miscellaneous	242.16	500.00	1,219.35	500.00	3,783.00	100.00
0.00	Capital Costs	0.00	0.00	509.04	0.00	0.00	0.00
898.78	VAT	1,700.33	500.00	346.81	500.00	605.00	600.00
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>25,030.26</b>	<b>15,557.00</b>	<b>56,568.31</b>	<b>15,606.36</b>	<b>31,784.50</b>	<b>15,434.00</b>
0.00	Levens Community Project Expenditure	4,656.00	0.00	85,024.86	0.00	145,542.00	0.00
0.00	Cumbria County Council Capital Fund	1,000.00	0.00	2,000.00	0.00	2,000.00	0.00
<b>15,584.04</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>30,686.26</b>	<b>15,557.00</b>	<b>143,593.17</b>	<b>15,606.36</b>	<b>179,326.50</b>	<b>15,434.00</b>

## BALANCE SHEETS

	01/04/2018	01/04/2019	01/04/2020
<b>Opening Balance</b>	<b>13,973.69</b>	<b>26,562.48</b>	<b>761,966.81</b>
<b>Add</b>			
Receipts	43,275.12	878,997.50	163,799.78
<b>Less Payments</b>	<b>30,686.26</b>	<b>143,593.17</b>	<b>179,326.50</b>
Closing Balance	<b>26,562.55</b>	<b>761,966.81</b>	<b>746,440.09</b>
Bank Reconciliation	26,562.48	761,966.81	N/A

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