

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held remotely by the use of audio-visual technology on 12 January 2021.

Present: Cllrs. R. Atfield (Chairman), S. Bagot, H. Burrow, K. Holmes (and as District Cllr.), D. Rogerson, R. Mason, M. R. Curry (Clerk); County Cllr. J Bland; District Cllr. B. Rendell (part) and 4 members of the public.

58/20 Apologies for Absence: PCSO. J. Park. The Chairman confirmed the resignation of Rachael Johnston as a result of work pressures in the current pandemic.

59/20 Declarations of interest: Cllr. Holmes asked it to be noted that the recent purchase of thorns had been sourced from a business where his son was employed. This was made clear in an email to Councillors on 18 December requesting approval of the quote for supply, which had been given. Cllr. Mason had confirmed that the quote was competitive with other suppliers and represented value for money and the purchase was approved.

60/20 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 10 November 2020 as a true record.

61/20 Public Participation:

- a) Mr S. Bavin highlighted a note containing misinformation about Covid-19 on a noticeboard near the Village Shop. It was agreed that this was not appropriate and should be removed.
- b) Diane O'Neill asked the Parish Council to encourage bus service operators to route the 555 Service from Kendal through the village. At present it stops at the bottom of Levens Lane leaving a long, dark (in winter) and potentially dangerous walk to the village. The Chairman confirmed that the Parish Council had made attempts to get it restored, but dwindling numbers and time constraints had been major factors in the operator's decision to reduce the service. The associated issue of improving pedestrian access on Levens Lane which the Parish Council, in conjunction with Cllr. Bland, has been working on for some time was raised. Cllr. Bland confirmed that a new Officer in Cumbria County Council will take up her post in February and that he had previously undertaken to arrange for her to visit and consider this issue.
- c) Mr David Parry asked the Parish Council to provide more information on the Levens Community Project including a detailed Business Plan with financial data. The Chairman responded that progress, key decisions and financial details are reported in the Newsletter and the Minutes of Parish Council meetings. Cllr. Mason added that the Project is managed as a cost neutral initiative based in income from grants and assets against expenditure. Significant elements of the Business Plan are commercially sensitive in advance of competitive tendering for the build phase. Mr Parry commented that his query did not raise questions of trust, but of transparency for those who wished to see more detail and asked the Parish Council to consider his request. He also raised the question of the rights of the public to record or film proceedings of Council meetings. The Chairman said that current Standing Orders expressly forbid this without express consent, but acknowledged that revised Model Standing Orders had been issued and confirmed that this matter would be considered as part of a more general review.

62/20 Reports:

- a) **Reports from Councillors attending meetings:** Cllr Rogerson reported on several meetings of the local B4RN Group since the last Parish Council meeting. Take up from the village has now exceeded the financial target required and plans are being finalised for the laying of conduits around the village starting on 18 January. B4RN is concerned to identify new developments that may wish to link into the network – such as Project initiatives at Cotes, Underhill and Church Hill. Cllr. Bland confirmed that resurfacing work is to commence on Church Hill during February and trenches need to be cut in advance of that work as no work will be allowed within 2 years of the laying of the new surface.
- b) **Police:** Jayne Park was unable to attend, but had sent a written report in which she noted welcome feedback from individuals on a recent spate of cold callers; also a break-in at the Hare and Hounds at the end of November (nothing taken). She is monitoring the number of cars at Levens Park in the context of lockdown.

- c) **District Councillor:** Cllr. Rendell reported that he will donate £150 to Levens Good Neighbours for a community transport scheme to get elderly residents to vaccination centres. The grant is for screens for 2 cars to protect occupants. It was agreed that the funds would be routed through the Parish Council. Cllr Homes reported that SLDC's new Locality Team is making arrangements to liaise direct with every Parish Council in the coming months.
- d) **County Councillor:** Cllr. Bland reported that resurfacing work including Church Road was planned to start in February. On plans for traffic management around the school, he had not heard back from Mo Dooz, but will press for a response.

63/20 Finance

- a) **Receipts:** The following receipts were noted for the period 01 November – 31 December :

10/12/20: Donation from the Institute to be held on behalf of B4RN:	£ 300.00
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- b) **Payments:** The following payments were **Approved:**
 - i) M R Curry Salary Nov 20: PC £356.89; Project £321.31; Charity £8.44;
Sub-Total November: **£686.64**. Salary Dec 20: PC: 112.36; Project £310.42
Mileage £13.00. Sub-Total December: **£435.78**. **Combined Total** £1,122.42
 - ii) M R Curry: Out of pocket expenses: printer toner: 102.05
 - iii) HMRC: PAYE etc. - Months 7-9: 552.73
Mitchinsons Accountants had re-issued Terms of Engagement for payroll services at the same price as previously and it was **Resolved** to re-engage them for 2021-22.
 - iv) CALC: Training Courses attended by the Clerk: 105.00
 - v) Andy Banks: Woodland H&S Report & plot maintenance: 1,254.00
The following payments previously approved by email were **Ratified:**
 - vi) Printing Plus: costs for Winter Newsletter: 159.88
 - vii) PKF Accountants: Audit Fee 2019-20: 1,920.00
 - viii) Select Plants: supply of thorns: 236.70
- c) **Annual Grants from PC Funds:** The Clerk reported that he had received letters of thanks from the 2 Air Ambulance Services who had each received £100 from the Parish Council. In respect of other grants considered annually (Playing Fields and the Methodist Church for hosting the Post Office) the Clerk was asked to remind them that they should submit written requests for grant support.
- d) **Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** The reconciled net balance of £22,665.73p at 31/12/20 was noted. Councillors also noted the Clerk's report that after deduction of ring-fenced funds held for others the underlying balance available to the Parish Council is £12,631.73p. This includes £2,177.83 ring-fenced for specific Parish Council purposes (£2,000 for woodland management and £177.83 for the Christmas event).
- e) **Budget 2021-22:** The Clerk circulated a budget performance review to 31 December, together with a projected end of year position and proposed budget for 2021-22. It was **Resolved** to approve the budget as proposed.
- f) **Annual Precept 2021-22:** Based on the approved Budget for 2021-22 it was **Resolved** to agree and submit a Precept request of £13,650.90 to SLDC.
- g) **Annual Governance and Accountancy Return (AGAR):** The Clerk confirmed that the External Auditor Report had been issued on 19 November 2020. This certified that the accounts for 2019-20 were concluded in accordance with proper practices. The Report was displayed on the Parish noticeboard and, with other audit documents, is on the Parish webpage. A matter of presentation regarding the failure to re-state the 2018-19 accounts on an income and expenditure basis had been raised. This had been rectified and attracted no criticism or penalty.
- h) **Banking Arrangements:** This issue remains under review. Following a complaint to HSBC about customer service, the gift of 2 hampers in acknowledgement had been put to good use as raffle prizes at the Christmas event
- i) **VAT:** It was **Resolved** to ask Dodd & Co to submit the VAT Return for Oct-Dec 2020.

64/20 Levens Community Project

- a) **Levens Community Project Committee:** Cllr Mason gave the following report:
 - i. Cotes – Groundworks are completed. Armitstead Barnett have been appointed as selling agents and are preparing particulars of sale.

- ii. Church Hill - Full planning consent (with conditions) was granted on 18 December. The site has been tidied for marketing purposes. Armitstead Barnett have been appointed as selling agents and are preparing particulars of sale.
 - iii. Underhill - Re-registration of the property in the name of the Parish Council as sole Trustee of Levens Charity has raised a legal issue with regard to the Legal Charge required by the Funding Agreement. This is being resolved by Project solicitors.
 - iv. New Village Hall: To secure a Zero rate VAT certificate, the new hall must be built by the Charity that is to run it. Investigations are underway regarding requirements to transfer the site to the newly created Levens Village Hall CIO which will then ask the Parish Council to manage the build phase on its behalf. Tender packs have been completed and being reviewed.
- b) To approve payments:** Following recommendation from the Project Management Committee, invoices **Approved** for payment were:
- i. Milne Moser: Legal Fees, Funding Agreement & registration matters: £ 960.00
 - ii. G. Schofield Associates: boundary wall design - it was **Resolved** not to pay this pending further clarification;
The following payment previously agreed by email was **Ratified**:
PDA Acoustic Consultants: Acoustic Report for the Village Hall: £ 840.00
- c) Approvals made by email:** The following approvals were **Ratified**:
- i. The appointment of Armitstead Barnett as selling agents following competitive tendering;
 - ii. The appointment of Paul Snape to design boundary wall solutions at the new Village Hall
- d) Investment of Funds:** The Clerk referred Councillors to his Report Minuted at 63/20(h) above.

65/20 Planning Applications:

a) New Planning Applications: The following new applications notified via SLDC were considered:

Application No.	Address	Proposal	Applicant	Type & Status	Comments
SL/2021/0002	15, The Green	Single storey rear extension and porch		Full Planning	No objection. See comment below
SL/2021/0006	12, the Green	Single storey rear extension		Full Planning	No objection. See comment below
It was Resolved not to object to the two applications above, but that Cllr Rogerson would alert the neighbours to the detail in case they had not appreciated the proposals. Cllr Burrow mentioned a covenant applying to the development of ex-local authority properties on the Green. Cllr Holmes was asked to investigate this matter.					
SL/2020/0903 & 0905	Two Acres, Force Lane	Retrospective for car port & single storey rear extens'n	Mrs M Whinfield	Full Planning	No Objection
SL/2020/0983	Low Levens Farm	Slurry Lagoon	Mr Parsons	Full Planning	Not confirmed
PN/2020/0061	Land nr. Bridlecroft	Gen p'pose agric building	Mr Slater	Withdrawn	
SL/2021/0013	Low Levens Farm	Demolition & reconstruction of b'dry wall & fence	Dallam Tower Estate	Full Planning	Resolved to Object. See comment below
Councillors noted that this was a listed structure associated with the adjacent historic property. It acknowledged that the wall was leaning towards the road, but that the foundations and lower courses were sound and saw no reason why the wall should not be repaired in situ.					

b) To note Planning Applications determined since last meeting:

Application No.	Address	Proposal	Applicant	Type & Status	Comments
SL/2020/0697	4, Greengate, Levens	Demolish garage; erect 2-storey and single storey side extensions	Mr & Mrs Kitchen	Full Planning	Approved with conditions 27/11/20
SL/2020/0343	Church Hill	Erect 3 dwellings	Levens PC	Reserved Matters	ACON 18/12/20

c) To note planning applications still to be determined:

Application No.	Address	Proposal	Applicant	Type & Status	Comments By
SL/2020/0863	19 The Green, Levens	Porch, side and rear extensions	Mr Tomlinson	Full Planning	Objection lodged.

The Clerk expressed his view that since the withdrawal of hard copies of planning applications by SLDC, the presentation and consideration of applications was less effective than it could be. It was **Resolved** to review this at the next meeting.

66/20 Christmas Events: Cllr. Burrow reported that despite the Coronavirus restrictions, Christmas activities had been well received. The tree had attracted many positive comments whilst the raffle and other events had encouraged active participation. Financial details would be confirmed at the next meeting. It was **Resolved** to write to Liz and Adam Hearnden and Vanessa and Dave at the Village Shop to thank them for their respective contributions. Cllr Bland offered to support the purchase of new lights for the 2021 event

67/20 Dog Fouling Issues: Councillors expressed disappointment that despite efforts, dog fouling continued to blight the local environment. It was noted that the problem was as acute in the National Park area of the Parish as within SLDCs area. Cllr Burrow had enquired at the National Park but there was, apparently no-one with responsibility for liaising on this issue. The Parish Council agreed to maintain its efforts as best it could – to encourage responsible behaviour; to try to identify culprits and to route complaints to LDNPA where appropriate.

68/20 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda:

- a) **Councillor Vacancy:** The Clerk reported that there had been one expression of interest in the advertised vacancy which remained to be considered. With regard to the vacancy caused by the resignation of Rachael Johnston, Council recorded its gratitude to her for her contribution to its work and **Resolved** to repeat the replacement process in respect to this vacancy.
- b) **Newsletter:** Councillors requested the Clerk to write to Levens Good Neighbours to thank them for facilitating distribution of the Newsletter. Janet Battye was thanked in this respect as was the Clerk for coordinating the content.
- c) **Highways Defect Report:** There was no recent report to consider, though it was noted that anyone can report highways defects direct to Cumbria County Council. A couple of faults with streetlights were noted and Cumbria County Council or SLDC would be alerted as appropriate.
- d) **Levens Traffic Management:** Cllr Bland reported that he had not yet had a response from Mo Dooz on proposals for the village initiative. A new Officer will be in post in February and Cllr Bland undertook to discuss the proposals for a pathway down Levens Lane with her as soon as possible after her appointment.
- e) **Maintenance Plan and Woodland Management:** Cllr Mason reported that the Tree Health and Safety Report had now been received. Recommendations would be referred back to Councillors for approval. It was agreed to write to Mr E Capstick to advise him of this development.
- f) **Parish Land:**
 - i. Brigsteer Road site: The Clerk confirmed that preparation of a risk assessment remains work in progress.
 - ii. Registration of land at Cotes: Final historical details of land ownership remain to be confirmed. Janet Battye has volunteered to assist with this work.
 - iii. Parish Hedge, Hutton Lane: It was agreed that this work could not proceed on 14 January due to renewed Coronavirus restrictions, but that Mr Stainton should be advised that this was only a postponement and that the work would be concluded as soon as appropriate to do so.

69/20 Correspondence: Councillors noted the Clerk’s report on correspondence received. No follow-up actions were required.

70/20 Future Agenda Items:

- The Old Carpet Shop
- Woodland Management Plan
- Presentation of planning applications

71/20 Date of the Next Meeting: The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council is on **Tuesday 09 February 2021** to be held as a remote meeting unless otherwise publicised.

The meeting closed at 10.18 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date:.....