

Levens Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held remotely by the use of audio-visual technology on 10 November 2020.

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

44/20 Apologies for Absence: District Cllr. B Rendell

45/20 Declarations of interest: None.

46/20 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 13 October 2020 as a true record.

47/20 Public Participation:

- a) Mrs Battye congratulated the Community Project for management of the groundworks at Cotes which were being conducted in a tidy way with the minimum of disruption.
- b) Mr. Simon Doddrell spoke in support of a request from B4RN (previously circulated) for a draw-down facility totalling £2,000, primarily to help the Project with expenses incurred by volunteers. It was noted that a ring-fenced sum of £1,500 was already available in the PC accounts and that therefore the request was for an additional £500 from Levens Charity. Mr Doddrell explained the financial framework behind a proposition that householders would be asked to contribute at least £50 to the Charity out of the connection 'incentive' of £150 payable to subscribers by B4RN. The contribution would be in recognition of the work of volunteers in fitting house-kits to individual properties enabling connection to the B4RN network. The receipts would be paid to Levens Charity and it was thought they could amount to several thousands of pounds. Administration of the finances would be undertaken by the local B4RN Team in liaison with the Clerk. Householders will be notified on the scheme by leaflet. Councillors reviewed the support already provided to B4RN and noted that £25.74p remained from the previous grant award, to which is the £1,500 received recently as a donation for B4RN and held as a ring-fenced fund. It was **Resolved** to make an additional £500 available to B4RN as a draw-down facility available from Levens Charity to be paid if and when requested.

48/20 Reports:

- a) **Reports from Councillors attending meetings:** Cllr Bagot reported on a recent meeting of the Institute Committee. They have been working very hard to make the building Covid secure for limited use, including as a quiet facility where people can work remotely. For clarity, it was **Agreed** to check whether businesses could be run from it. Janet Battye commented on a recent meeting of the Playing Fields Committee where it had been agreed to focus on the needs of older children in the ongoing redevelopment of facilities. Cllr. Burrow asked if the Committee could advise the PC through the Clerk of events they are organising just so as to avoid any local clashes of activity. Cllr. Bagot undertook to refer the point on.
- b) **Police:** No report had been received, but Cllr. Holmes reported that resources were still stretched as a result of illness. Cllr. Rogerson reported on a further incident of cold-calling in the village with similar activity in Brigsteer. A parishioner pointed out that following previous incidents of cold-calling, there had been a spate of burglaries. Cllr. Burrow confirmed that all the 'No Cold-Calling' stickers had been sent to the Shop. Cllr. Atfield reported that Levens Good Neighbours had considered security issues and were to circulate an advisory leaflet to every household on dealing with phone scams and cold-calling. It was **Agreed** that if ready in time the planned PC Newsletter could share this delivery run to households.
- c) **District Councillor:** Cllr. Holmes confirmed that Cllr .Rendell had intended to attend, but that Zoom details had been confused this time. The Clerk undertook to write to clarify the matter. He reported that the District Council were pressing ahead in support of the Morecambe Bay Area unitary-authority proposal and were considering post-Covid recovery initiatives.
- d) **County Councillor:** Cllr. Bland reported that the recent rainfall had caused serious problems with flooding in the Lyth Valley, but that the pumps had worked to drain surface water effectively. The County Council had submitted its proposal for a single unitary authority for

Cumbria and that the matter was now with Government for consideration. A further meeting on improvements to the A590 was to be held in January.

49/20 Finance

- a) **Receipts:** The following receipts for the period 01 October-31 October were noted:
22/10/20: Donation to be held on behalf of B4RN: £ 1,500.00
- b) **Payments:** The following payments were **Approved:**
- i) M R Curry Salary Oct 2020: PC £361.44; Project £457.58; Charity £10.50;
Mileage £19.50; Expenses £24.42; & approved invoices paid direct:
HM Land Registry fees £80.00; Zoom subscription £119.13 £ 1,072.57
 - ii) Great North Air Ambulance: Donation 100.00
 - iii) North West Air Ambulance: Donation 100.00
 - iv) Crosthwaite Parish Council via Cllr J Holmes from Cllr Bland CCC fund: 1,000.00
 - v) Cllr R Atfield: Reimbursement of costs, Remembrance Wreath 30.00
 - vi) VFMS: posts for SIDs placements: 147.75
- c) **Bank Reconciliation and report on Ring-Fenced Funds:** The reconciled balance of £27,562.43p at 31/10/20 was noted. There was one unrepresented cheque (£40.00) leaving a net balance of £27,522.43. Councillors also noted the Clerk's report showing the Parish Council with an underlying balance of £13,560.60. A further £3,177.83 is held as ring-fenced funds for specific Parish Council purposes.
- d) **Draft Budget 2021-22:** The Clerk circulated a budget performance review to 31 October, together with a projected end of year position and draft budget for 2021-22. The latter will be considered with the Precept bid at the meeting on 12 January.
- e) **Annual Governance and Accountancy Return (AGAR):** The external auditor has commenced review of the accounts for 2019-20 and raised two queries which the Clerk is dealing with. The Clerk was given authority to seek professional advice if necessary.
- f) **Banking Arrangements:** The Clerk reviewed his unsuccessful efforts to engage HSBC in a meaningful conversation about opening an interest bearing account, providing surety to UU for the Underhill project and to discuss online banking. He had written a formal complaint, but so far had received only an acknowledgement. Cllr Burrow reminded Members that it had been agreed at the Clerk's appraisal that accounting programmes should be explored. It was **Agreed** that the Chairman and Clerk would discuss this further and report back with any conclusions / recommendations.
- g) **VAT:** The Clerk reported that Dodd & Co had submitted a VAT return to 30 September and that the figures reconciled with a total net refund of £6,865.00 due.

50/20 Levens Community Project

- a) **Levens Community Project Committee:** Councillors noted the Minutes of the Project Management Committee held on 03 November and in particular:
- i. Cotes - Thacker's have started groundworks which are going well;
 - ii. Church Hill - Public notices for full planning consent have been posted;
 - iii. Underhill: The Parish Council **Agreed** the recommendation to pay the required 100% surety required by UU up-front rather than seeking a 3rd party guarantor;
 - iv. New Village Hall: Structural engineer designs for the boundary walls are still awaited. Tender packs are nearing completion. The balance of the LIPs grant has been received.
 - v. Councillors noted that the Project bank balance was successfully reconciled as at 23 October with a balance of £754,106.02p. Cllr. Mason confirmed that the Funding Agreement had now been signed by all parties and that discussion regarding the treatment of VAT was ongoing with the Project accountants.
- b) **Payments Required:** Following recommendation from the Project Management Committee, invoices **Approved** for payment were:
- i. R G Parkins: Design and detail, Underhill – balance due £3,793.49
 - ii. Milne Moser: Legal Fees, Funding Agreement etc £1,511.94
 - iii. Wrigleys final invoice for work associated with Funding Agreement £3,194.00
- c) **Investment of Funds:** The Clerk referred Councillors to his Report Minuted at 49/20(f) above.

51/20 Planning Applications:

- a) New Planning Applications: The following new planning applications notified via SLDC since 09/09/20 were considered:

Application No.	Address	Proposal	Applicant	Type & Status	Comments
SL/2019/0343	Allotment Land, Church Road, Levens	Erection of 3 dwellings (revised plans)	Levens Parish Council	Full planning	Noted

- b) To note Planning Applications determined since last meeting

Application No.	Address	Proposal	Type & Status	Decision noted
SL/2019/0735	Plot of land adjacent to The Langdales	Erection of dwelling house	Reserved Matters	ACON 25/09/20. See comment below

Councillors had approved a note drafted by the Clerk to Development Management on matters relating to this case. A response was awaited.

It was also noted that digging out had commenced at the Lakesway Caravan Park and it was agreed to check if work on providing passing places had been completed as required.

- c) To note planning applications still to be determined

Application No.	Address	Proposal	Applicant	Type & Status	Comments By
Church Hill proposed development for Levens Parish Council					

The Clerk reminded Councillors that he picked up detail on planning matters from the Weekly Lists circulated by SLDC. Planning activity as reflected in these had been at a relatively low level in Levens over the recent period. Cllr Rogerson commented that the Weekly Lists did not always reflect all the planning matters under consideration or decisions made. He felt that further information was available from alternative sources in SLDC and **Agreed** to discuss this direct with the Clerk.

- 52/20 Christmas Events:** Cllr. Burrow reported that the tree was to be erected over the weekend 14/15 November. It was to be decorated as soon as possible thereafter with up to 250 rainbow bows and the lights retained from last year. Planned events include a raffle for a Christmas cake and prize for the best 'Christmas Star' competition. It was hoped to have a socially distanced switch-on with Facebook providing additional support for community awareness. The 'Just-Giving' initiative had raised over £300 so far.

- 53/20 B4RN:** The main matter relating to B4RN had been dealt with earlier in the meeting (see Minute 47/20(b) above). In addition, Cllr. Rogerson reported that 16 connections were live with 5 more close to completion. He confirmed that the 'urban' nature of the Levens B4RN initiative is a major challenge for the central organisation, but it is treating it as a valuable learning opportunity. That they have requested an extension from Gilpin Bridge on to Witherslack is seen as a very good sign of confidence in the end result. In response to Cllr. Atfield, he confirmed that householders were receiving advice about where, on their property they should locate the house kit. Cllr. Bland reported that Crosthwaite School, Church and Village Hall have been offered free connections via B4RN.

54/20 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda:

- a) **Councillor Vacancy:** The Clerk reported that all required notices had been published and that if no election was required then co-option could be considered as of 25 November.
- b) **Newsletter:** The Clerk confirmed that items had been prepared for a Winter edition of the Newsletter. He undertook to get this to print in time to share a joint distribution to all households with Levens Good Neighbours security leaflet.
- c) **Highways Defect Report:** There is currently no update on which to report.
- d) **Levens Traffic Management:** The village scheme and the possible pathway down Levens Lane remain work in hand. Cllr Bland will try to progress these.
- e) **Maintenance Plan and Woodland Management:** The Tree Health and Safety Report is still awaited, pending Mr Banks securing his professional indemnity insurance. The Council has received a letter of complaint from Mr Capstick about trees adjacent to his property. The Clerk has previously been in correspondence with him on this matter to explain that detailed recommendations are awaited and will follow-up with him to confirm.

f) Parish Land:

- i. Brigsteer Road site: The Clerk confirmed that he had added this site to the Asset Register and notified the insurers of its new status. Risk assessment and health and safety monitoring are required. The Clerk will prepare the former.
- ii. Registration of land at Cotes: The Clerk has partially completed an application for transfer of title and will submit when final historical details have been confirmed.
- iii. Parish Hedge, Hutton Lane: Cllr. Mason will arrange a date for this work.
- iv. Allotments: A termination of tenancy was noted and the vacancy will be offered to next in line on the waiting list.

55/20 Correspondence: Councillors noted the Schedule of Correspondence previously circulated. In addition to the letter from Mr Capstick (discussed at 54/20(f)) Councillors also noted correspondence from I. Hodkinson regarding the management of the flower rich verge at the Crossings. Councillors agreed to do all possible to protect this plot, particularly from early cutting, and the possibility of signage was mentioned. Cllr Holmes offered aluminium posts if appropriate. In the meantime, the Clerk will continue dialogue with Mr Hodkinson to determine an appropriate management regime.

56/20 Future Agenda Items:

- Approval of budget and Precept bid
- Dog fouling issues

57/20 Date of the Next Meeting: The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council is on Tuesday 12 January 2021 to be held as a remote meeting unless otherwise publicised.

The meeting closed at 9.35 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date:.....