

Levens Parish Council

MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 12 November 2024 in Levens Methodist Church commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. R. Atfield (Chairman), Cllr. J. Battye, H. Burrow, D. Forshaw, K. Holmes, R. Mason, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy,

In Attendance: M. R. Curry (Clerk).

76/24 Apologies for Absence: All Councillors were present - no other apologies had been received.

77/24 Declarations of Interest: Other than general declarations in respect of matters relating to the Playing Fields from Cllrs. Atfield, Battye and Holmes no other Declarations of Interest or Requests for Dispensation had been received or were submitted. The Clerk referred to a paper previously circulated confirming the procedure required and it was noted that the Parish Council conforms to requirements.

78/24 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 08 October 2024 as a true record.

79/24 Public Participation: No members of the public were present.

80/24 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- i. Cllr. Atfield had been unable to attend the CALC AGM held on 12 October. The minutes will be circulated when received.
- ii. Cllr. Rogerson had attended the W&FC's Bridge Briefing Meeting for Parish Councils held on 22 October and the Parish Council had been represented at the drop-in event in Brigsteer on the 22nd. Investigative work on bridge structures continues and is concentrating on determining the internal specifications of concrete density and steel supports. It is hoped that these will prove sufficient to enable limited, weight restricted access across the two bridges in due course.

b) Westmorland & Furness Council (W&FC): Cllr Battye reported as follows:

- i. A location for a memorial bench on The Green has been identified and agreed with Mrs. Pooley. Local residents have been consulted.
- ii. W&FC has some S.106 money available for the installation of play equipment on an appropriate site in the Parish. There was discussion about the process and procedure that should be applied to determining a site and the role of the Parish Council in contributing to the decision on what site should be selected. Cllr. Battye undertook to provide more detail on this.
- iii. W&FC is streamlining the legacy Public Space Protection Orders inherited from the old District Councils and working towards publication of new PCSOs specific to W&FC.
- iv. The Ward Boundary consultation has closed. Levens may go into a new Ward with Milnthorpe together with a number of other local parishes.
- v. W&FC has issued a questionnaire on waste disposal and is to publicise an on-line consultation event to be held in the near future. Cllr. Battye stressed that recycled waste does not go to landfill.
- vi. Cllr. Battye's work with Children's Services continues. There is to be a consultation with local communities on admission policies for local primary schools.
- vii. Various initiatives promoting nature recovery have been publicised and circulated.
- viii. The Levens Greening Campaign continues to focus on local initiatives.

c) Police: The most recent editions of the Focus Newsletter had been circulated. Operation Enhance to target anti-social behaviour continues.

81/24 Finance

a) Receipts: Councillors noted that there had been no receipts for the period 01 – 31 October 2024.

b) Pay Award: Cllrs. noted the recently published Local Government Pay Agreement for 2024/25 and acknowledged the new rate to be paid plus back-pay due from April 2024. Salary henceforth will be paid at £16.93p.p.h (Parish Council and Levens Charity) and £20.98p.p.h. for the Project.

c) Payments:

Payments to be Ratified: The following payments made between meetings were **Approved:**

- | | |
|--|----------|
| i. HMRC: VAT payment due – Q2: | £ 479.00 |
| ii. Cllr. H. Burrow: Expenses Christmas event: | £ 84.58 |

Payments Approved:

- iii. M R Curry: Salary October 2024: (PC: £335.22; Backpay: £60.23; Project: £222.39; Backpay: 61.37; Charity: £0.00; Backpay: £5.85; Mileage: £16.20; Expenses: £17.60): **Total** £ 718.86
 - iv. Treescapes Consultancy: Tree Survey and Report £ 1,380.00
 - v. Printing Plus: Winter Newsletter £ 154.00
 - vi. Levens Methodist Church: Room Hire to 31 March 2025 £ 137.50
 - vii. Lune Valley Landscapes: Grass Cutting £ 240.00
 - viii. Cllr. H. Burrow: Expenses Christmas event: £ 8.05
 - ix. Direct Supplies: Defibrillator replacements - Approval given for spend up to: £ 180.00
 - x. Nothing has been heard from Copyright Agent
- d) **Bank Reconciliation:** The Clerk submitted a bank reconciliation showing a bank statement balance of £20,458.28p as at 31 October. There were three unpresented cheques totalling £583.57 leaving a net balance of £19,874.71. This was accepted and signed by the Chairman. Ring-fenced funds stand at £6,064.31 being £1,035.00 (woodland management), £2,057.28 (Christmas event); £910.00 (CIL award 2017-18); £2062.03 (CIL award 2023-24). It was **Agreed** to double check whether the payment of £50.00 to Levens Playgroup had been made.
- e) **Budgets:**
- i. 2024-25 Budget Review: The Clerk reported on the outcome of a recent budget review for both income and expenditure which had been circulated. Outturns to 31 October 2024 and projections to 31 March 2025 had been made for all cost centres and based on those figures he had proposed that the budget will be returned in line with the original forecast. Councillors noted and **Agreed** his projections.
 - ii. Proposals for 2025-26 including draft budget: The Clerk had prepared draft budgets for income and expenditure which had been circulated. The initial projections had not identified any matters of concern or exception, but it was noted that it was too early to consider and approve a full draft. Councillors **Agreed** to note the proposed figures prior to considering the final draft and approving the 2025-26 budget at the January meeting.
- f) **Adoption of Revised Financial Regulations:** The Clerk reported that NALC has issued revised Model Financial Regulations. These will be put to the Council for approval with other governance documents in February.
- g) **Bank Mandate Update –** Work to update authorised signatories continues. HSBC have issued documentation relating to Common Reporting Standards which requires completion by a Parish Council signatory.

82/24 Levens Community Project: A meeting of the Project Advisory Group (PAG) had been held on 05 November and Cllr. Mason reported as follows:

- a) **Project Updates:** Plot 3 Church Road: This remains on the market and Councillors agreed the PAG recommendation to leave it on sale at £140,000.
- i. Underhill – water connection: Addresses for the proposed houses are required in order to secure the water connection – initially as a single on-site standpipe.
 - ii. Underhill - electricity supply: Tony Hills is securing the necessary wayleaves from the EA – a method statement from Tim Thacker is required.
 - iii. Sales of stone from the new village hall site continue and the sale of timber has been agreed. Receipts from the latter are due to the Parish Council.
 - iv. The Community Ownership Fund remains closed to applications for the time being.
 - v. Liaison with local Housing Associations to explore support options for delivering the affordable houses is progressing.
 - vi. An application for grant to the W&FC Affordable Housing Fund is being prepared.
- b) **Appointment of Contractors:**
Work is continuing to secure best value by considering alternative contractor and construction-phase models. Structural specifications are being reviewed. It is anticipated that updated information should be available by early-December. The possibility of a joint PAG and Parish Council Working Group meeting was raised.
- c) **Bank Reconciliation and Financial Report:** The most recent bank reconciliations for both the current account and the deposit account had been presented to PAG as follows:
- i. Current Account: Funds in Hand at 23 October were £18,892.06, though £750 was due to the Parish Council for the sale of timber.
 - ii. Project Funds on Deposit: Funds in hand in the deposit account at 30 September were £1,493,115.70.

- iii. The Clerk is seeking to place funds on short term deposit via [Business Money Market Accounts | Business Banking | HSBC](#). Business Money Market Accounts / Business

d) Payment of the following Payment was Approved:

James Senior: Walling costs for stonework around the new electric box (Village Hall): £595.70

83/24 Planning Applications:

- a) Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule on 11 November had been circulated and the following were noted:

| PC Ref | Application No. | Location | Proposal | Status |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| 43. | SL/2022/0074 | Land to NE Levens La | Footpath down Levens La. Work on confirming a plan will continue. | No response has yet been received to the request to extend the timeframe for the submission of detailed plans to 31 March 2025. |
| 29. | 2024/0232/FPA | Lakesway Holiday Home & Lodge Park | Erection of leisure and spa facility building and associated infrastructure | PC objection submitted. Apparently going to Committee in December. The PC plans to make representation to support its Objection. |
| 40. | 2024/1619/FPA | Newholme, Levens LA8 8NP | Front single storey extension and conservatory | After discussion, it was Resolved to submit No Objection to this application |
| 43. | 2024/1328/FPA 2024/1465/FPA | Levens Village Shop LA8 8ND | First floor extension to provide additional holiday accommodation to support the shop business. | See below. |
| <p>Levens Village Shop: Application 2024/0361/FPA was considered by the PC in March 2024. The Minutes record: <i>"Cllrs. had sympathy for the economic case. It was felt however that the proposed extension was a little out of proportion and that the proposed finish was not in keeping with the rest of the building. After consideration,Councillors did not feel that the issues raised were sufficient to object, but that Planners should note ... and consider whether conditions on external finish should be made."</i> It was then understood that this application had been withdrawn and the PC submission was not made. The Planning Portal shows that in fact that the application had been REFUSED on 29/04/2024. A second application (2024/1465/FPA) amending the initial design was APPROVED on 09/10/2024. Notwithstanding that approval, the applicants have lodged an appeal against the refusal of the original plans as, in a note to the Chairman, they say: <i>"The original flat roof application was refused but this is our preferred option....."</i> The PC has until 13 December to make representations to the appeal process. It was Agreed to make representation to the Planning Inspectorate based on the above and the Clerk was requested to draft a note for approval.</p> | | | | |
| 44. | SL/2021/0782 | 8 The Green, Levens LA8 8NH | Mon-material amendment | After discussion, it was Resolved that there was No Objection to this application |
| 45. | 2024/2051/FPA | West Lea, Levens, LA8 8PA | Raise roof to provide for 1 st floor extension | After discussion, it was Resolved to submit No Objection to this application |
| 46. | 7/2024/5607 | Sizergh Castle LA8 8AE | Access track to Chapel Wood | For information only – no provision for consultation |

- b) Other planning matters:** No other planning matters were raised.

84/24 Parish Council Land and Allotments:

- a) Tenants and Rents 2024:** The Clerk reported that the rent on three allotments was overdue, and these will be chased. All other land rents have been received.
- b) Allotments (rental arrangements with Levens Hall):** The Clerk confirmed that the current Agreement for the lease of land from Levens Hall Estates runs from 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2026 and thus next year will be the final year of the current term. The application to Cllr Battye for a grant of £500 from her member budget for an upgrade of the water supply to individual allotments was **Agreed**.
- c) VAT Status:** The Clerk reported that advice from the accountants says: "Supplies of land and buildings, such as freehold sales, leasing or renting, are normally exempt from VAT. This means that no VAT is payable, *but the person making the supply cannot normally recover any of the VAT incurred on their own expenses.*" The Parish Council has not 'elected to tax' and therefore it is correct in not charging VAT on the rents from allotment holders. However, Levens Hall does charge VAT to the Parish Council, which it is entitled to do, but the Parish Council should not reclaim the VAT paid. The Parish Council runs the allotments on a cost neutral basis, however not to reclaim the VAT will lead to a shortfall of £72.00 on the year. It was **Agreed** not to increase rents in the one year left of the current term and absorb the shortfall but to advise tenants that rents will need to be reviewed for 2026-27 and thereafter.

85/24: Levens Emergency Plan: It was confirmed that progress towards creating an Emergency Plan had stalled for want of a local co-ordinator. Cllr. Forshaw **Agreed** to review the progress to date, and the Clerk will send current documents and an update to him.

86/24 Levens Charity:

- a) **Financial Report:** The Clerk reported that the Appointed Trustees had met immediately before the Parish Council meeting and had received a Report for the financial year 2023-24, with an update for the first half of the current year. Overall, investments continue to perform well, and the Parish Council, acting as Sole Trustee, **Endorsed** the recommendation of the Appointed Trustees to leave the capital assets where they are for now. The previous agreement in principle to utilise Charity assets for the Project if required (to support community benefit from the delivery of affordable houses to be owned by the Charity) was confirmed, subject to retention of funds for local use. On the recommendation of the Appointed Trustees, Councillors **Approved** the Report which will be circulated.
- b) **Savin Brow Quarry:** Acting as Sole Trustee of the Savin Brow Quarry Charity, Councillors **Agreed** to follow-up on Charity Commission approval and transfer its assets to Levens Charity before closure.

87/24 Parish Assets and Land:

- a) **Maintenance work:** Cllr. Holmes reported that Andy Brayshaw had satisfactorily completed tidying-up work (hedges / verges etc). Cllr. Burrow raised the untidy condition of the bus shelters (A590 slip road and Levens Bridge). It was **Agreed** to ask Highways England to give attention to the former and to approach W&FC about the latter. It was also noted that fascia boards on the village centre shelter required attention.
- b) **Brigsteer Road site:** James Senior is still to complete the walling work. Cllr. Mason will push forward completion of content for the on-site information board.
- c) **Jubilee Orchard:** Cllr. Mason confirmed that he has asked Tim Thacker to level the site – a piece of work that might be tied in with the laying of the electricity duct to the Underhill development.
- d) **Reinstatement of land at Nelson Square:** Reinstatement has been completed. The work will be monitored to ensure a satisfactory result.
- e) **Woodland Management:** The Tree H&S Survey Report has been completed. Cllr Holmes will review it and make recommendations as to priority work.

88/24 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** The following reports were noted:
 - i) Levens Lane footpath: Cllr. Battye reported that consultants have now been appointed to complete the feasibility study.
 - ii) Traffic Management within the village: The Clerk has written to Helen Karaaslan about the traffic management plan discussed several years ago but has received no response. Cllr. Battye will follow-up.
 - iii) Road repairs and advance notice: The Clerk confirmed that he was awaiting a response from HIAMS to his request for earlier notification of the upcoming programme of road works within the Parish.
 - iv) Bridge Closures: Previously reported under Item 80/24(ii). Cllr. Rogerson reported that the format of the Newsletter was better for presenting to the local community on the website and Facebook.
- b) **Parish Council Newsletter:** The Chairman reported that delivery, content and distribution of the Winter Newsletter had all gone according to plan. He asked that a note of thanks to the Clerk for his contribution be inserted in the Minutes.
- c) **Parish Council Communications and Social Media Policy:** The Clerk reported that a draft policy had been prepared and will be circulated for comment.

89/24 Correspondence Received:

- a) An enquiry from a parishioner about the sale of wood from the village hall site. The Clerk will respond.
- b) A note of thanks from a parishioner to the Chairman for the thinning of trees on Hutton Lane.

90/24 Future Agenda Items:

- a) 2025-26 Budget
- b) Otherwise, follow-up to the current Agenda items.

91/24 Date of the Next Meeting:

The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday 14 January 2025 in the Methodist Church, Levens.

The meeting closed at 9.55 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....