

Levens Parish Council

MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 08 July 2025 in Levens Methodist Church commencing at 7.30 p.m.

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

In Attendance: M. R. Curry (Clerk) and one member of the public.

25/25 Apologies for Absence: Written apologies had been received from Cllr. Atfield.

26/25 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr. Forshaw declared an interest in Item 8(a) (Planning Application 2025/1261/HOU).
The Clerk reported that no requests for dispensation had been submitted.

27/25 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Acting-Chair be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 10 June 2025 as a true record.

28/25 Public Participation: The parishioner present raised two items regarding footpaths:

- i) The footpath running from the Old Road along the east side of the River Gilpin to the junction with the A5074 is overgrown and impassible. This will be reported on HIAMS.
- ii) The footpath adjacent to the Hare and Hounds car park needs some work following an accident and resultant damage to the boundary wall. The path is passible but requires some reinstatement. This was noted for inspection and follow-up.

29/25 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings: No reports were submitted.

b) Westmorland & Furness Council (W&FC): Cllr Battye reported on the following initiatives:

- i. Parking in the village: Cllr. Battye is in discussion with Helen Karaaslan regarding parking and traffic safety measures in the vicinity of the school. Disappointment was expressed about the lack of progress on this despite previous liaison with W&FC on possible improvements. In addition to measures that should be taken, it was observed that children's personal awareness of safety on the roadside should be factored into this initiative.
- ii. W&FC is progressing a review of car-parking across the region.
- iii. Following the Feasibility Study on Levens Lane for the footpath, Cllr. Battye confirmed that tree and topographical surveys are due to be completed, following which next steps will be proposed.
- iv. The Waste and Recycling Services review is due to present recommendations soon following the recent public consultation.
- v. Cllr. Battye is setting up a meeting with the W&FC Officer with responsibility for monitoring and responding to incidents of dog waste. Cllr. Burrow will be involved in this discussion.
- vi. Cllr. Battye has now had confirmation of grant available via the Locality Board and asked for ideas on initiatives / projects that might benefit locally. It was confirmed that work on the allotments supported by a grant from last year still needed to be completed.

c) Police: The most recent editions of the Focus Newsletter had been circulated otherwise there were no matters of direct relevance to Levens.

30/25 Finance

a) Receipts: The following receipts to a total of £675.00 for the period 01 May – 30 June 2025 were noted:

i. Land Rents:	£	55.00
ii. Allotment Rent:	£	20.00
iii. Levens Charity - Salary Refund 2024-25:	£	600.00

b) Payments Required: The following payments were **Approved**:

i. M R Curry: Salary June 2025: (PC: £389.39; LCP: £407.11; Charity: £16.97 Mileage: £37.80; Expenses: £3.58) Total:	£	854.85
ii. HMRC: PAYE etc Months 1-3 2025-26:	£	785.82
iii. G D Airey: Internal Audit fee (re-issue - error on previous cheque):	£	100.00
iv. M R Richardson: Preparation of AGAR for external audit:	£	336.75
v. Other payments falling due after publication of the Agenda were Approved as follows:		
vi. Stramongate Press – Summer Newsletter:	£	154.00

- c) **Bank Reconciliation** and Ring-fenced Funds at 30 June 2025: The bank reconciliation at 30 June (circulated in advance of the meeting) showed a balance of £31,041.42 (excluding an un-presented cheque of £432.00) as evidenced by the bank statement. The Chairman was authorised to sign the bank statement accordingly. Ring-fenced funds are £7,198.74 split between Christmas Funds (£2,758.71), Woodland management (£2,200) and CIL funds (£2,240.03).
- d) **Bank Mandate:** The Clerk reported that the Chairman continues to work with HSBC to set up digital banking which remains work in progress.
- e) **Annual Governance & Accounting Report 2024-25 (AGAR):** Councillors noted that all documents have been submitted to External Auditor. All documents (bar one) are uploaded to website and relevant ones to the Noticeboard.

31/25 Levens Community Project:

- a) **Levens Project Advisory Group:** Cllr. Mason reported on the PAG meeting held on 01/07/2025 as follows:
 - i. Sale of Plot 3, Church Hill: It was **Agreed** to get this property back on the market after confirmation of the benefits of undergrounding the overhead electricity supply and preparation of a graphic board – both issues to be put to the selling Agents.
 - ii. Underhill: Following the water connection, Water+ who act as agents for United Utilities are sending water charge notices to a private address on Underhill. The Clerk has been in touch to rectify this. There is to be a meeting with Affordable Housing Officers from W&FC on 16 July to discuss future funding options from the Community Led Housing Fund.
 - iii. New Village Hall: Following sign-off by structural engineers to the Project and as a major cost saving exercise by Leggio Blocks, Tim Thacker has completed the installation of a retaining wall immediately to the east of the proposed footprint of the building as part of his engagement for groundworks.
 - iv. Building Regulations: Following a previous and approved application for Building Regulations at both the new village hall and Underhill, the Project Team is also working with Building Inspectors to determine requirements under updated building regulations.
 - v. Tendering process: Invitations to tender for the construction phase have been sent to a further three contractors. One has returned a tender at a similar level to those previously received; one declined to submit and a third has offered very meaningful value engineered options and a build phase framework which, when combined, look to deliver significant cost savings. PAG met with a representative of the latter and were impressed with his approach and have recommended further investigation of this overall package. Councillors **Agreed** that this option should be pursued to establish an initial and overall cost proposal.
 - vi. Cllr. Mason reported that he and the Clerk had met with Mr and Mrs Harrison on 30 June and had had a lengthy discussion about the component parts of the Project, project management and the overall financial position. Several points had been clarified and from correspondence after the meeting Cllr. Mason understood that Mr and Mrs Harrison had felt the meeting to have been positive, informative and constructive and that they came away satisfied with explanations of their queries and with a better understanding of how the project had been handled and managed over the years.
 - vii. Project Management and Finance Review: Funds in Hand at 23 June on the current account were £21,953.66. A further £8,160 (Infrastructure Grant for the water connection Underhill) and £7,179.56 (Capacity Grant) were due. The Clerk confirmed that invoices for reimbursement had been sent some time ago and that he had sent reminders for payment. On receipt, this will take the total balance to approx. £37,292.
The Clerk's recommendation to transfer £50,000 from the Deposit Account to the Current Account to cover the cost of Tim Thacker's bill was **Agreed**. Any surplus funds would then be transferred back to the Deposit Account.
 The latest statement for the Deposit Account showed a balance of £1,514,716.92p at 30 June. This figure included £6,879.05 interest for the previous quarter.
- b) **To Approve payments recommended by PAG:** The following payment was **Approved** (subject to receipt of Architect's Certificate:
 - i. J Thacker & Sons: Pre-construction groundworks at NVH site: £ 49,684.80

32/25 Planning Applications:

- a) **Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule on 08 April had been circulated and were noted. The following were of specific note:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Status
47.	2024/2242/FPA	Fiddlers Croft Church Road	Removal of Condition 9 – habitation of lower ground floor	Approval of the appeal against the original determination was noted.
48.	2024/2299/FPA	Land adjacent to the Langdales	Erection of a 2-storey extension as an amendment to previously approved plans.	Appeal commenced 15/05/2025.
49.	2025/0538/LDPR	1 Vicarage Rd. Levens	Residential home for young people	Application Withdrawn 15/05/2025
29.	2024/0232/FPA	Lakesway Holiday Home & Lodge Park	Erection of leisure and spa facility building and associated infrastructure	The application was approved by the Planning Committee on 09 January, but the decision is still showing as pending.
2.	2025/1093/HOU	Greengate Hse, Levens	Convert outbuilding to small single bedroom annexe	Considered – Resolved to make No Objection
3.	2025/1210/ADV	A590 Slip Rd junction with Sampool La	Advertisement consent for directional sign on existing post	Considered – Noted as retrospective but resolved to make No Objection
4.	2025/1261/HOU	Heronssdyke, Levens LA8 8PJ	2-storey side extension, part to be built on existing garage footprint.	Having declared an interest in this application, Cllr. Forshaw left the room whilst the matter was considered. It was Resolved to make No Objection

- b) **Other planning matters:** Councillors noted that preparation of the new Local Plan for Westmorland and Furness was progressing and would monitor the outcome of the recent 'Call for Sites'.

33/25 Levens Charity

- a) **Wind-up of Savin Brow Charity:** The Clerk reported that the investment managed by M&G had been sold and £1,798.70p received into the Levens Charity Account on 22 April. A request for the sale of investments held by Black Rock valued at approximately £250.00 had not been actioned as the fund managers are repeating a request for various documents which had previously been supplied. The Clerk will continue to try to resolve this issue to enable the wind-up of the Savin Brow Charity.
- b) **Closure of Investment Fund:** The Clerk reported that M&G Investments had announced the closure of one of their investment accounts and had remitted the sum of £3,193.97 to the Levens Charity account on 26 June. The Clerk will explore opportunities for the re-investment of this as part of the capital asset.

34/25 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** The following reports were noted:
- Levens Lane footpath:** Cllr. Battye had previously reported on this item (29/25(b)(iii)).
 - Traffic Management within the village:** Cllr. Battye had previously reported on this item (29/25(b)(i)).
 - 20-m.p.h. Initiative:** Promotion of the public consultation to determine if there was sufficient support for the implementation of a 20-m.p.h. speed limit was going well with a 37% response rate secured as at 26 June. Efforts to promote the consultation which closes on 18 July will continue.
- b) **Parish Assets and Land**
- Maintenance Work Required:** Cllr. Holmes reported that Andy Brayshaw had cut the verges as identified on the recent informal tour of the village (except where there were flowering plants) and the Brigsteer Road picnic site. It was **Agreed** that Andy should be asked to clean up the bus shelter at Levens Bridge by removing encroaching vegetation and (if possible) graffiti.
- c) **Street Lighting Policy:** The Clerk confirmed that he had responded to W&FC with the agreed position on the future ownership of parish streetlights i.e. to transfer then to W&FC, and for them to be dimmed to 50% between 2100 and - 0600hrs.
- d) **Allotments and Land Rents:** All but two allotment rents were now paid. Reminders will be sent to those outstanding. The letter explaining the rental situation for 2026-27 remains to be sent. Land rents are fully paid, and car-park rents have been requested. The car-park previously occupied by the late Mr & Mrs Edmondson will remain vacant for the time being.
- e) **Dog-Fouling:** Cllr. Battye had previously reported on this item (29/25(b)(v)).
- f) **Parish Emergency Plan:** Cllr. Forshaw reported that he was meeting with an Officer from W&FC to discuss funding for emergency packs. If that can be secured, then the Plan can be launched and managed as operational. Councillors thanked Cllr. Forshaw for developing this initiative.

35/25 Correspondence Received: Other than the routine receipt of communications from regional agencies, including various dates for engagement meetings on current initiatives (circulated as appropriate) the following correspondence (excluding items discussed in the meeting) was noted:

- a) 16/06/2025: Environment Agency announcing a new online reporting facility
- b) 20/06/2025: Notification of a meeting in Leasgill on 24 July to discuss Hyperfast Broadband
- c) 20/06/2025: Notice from CALC about an on-line session to discuss affordable housing
- d) 27/06/2025: A note from Levens School expressing possible incidents of anti-social behaviour on the Playing Fields after school. Councillors noted the concerns which it assumed will be dealt with appropriately by the school.

36/25 Future Agenda Items:

- a) Follow-up on the current Agenda items but also to include:
- b) Levens village Welcome Sign and the state of road signs generally

37/25 Date of the Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday 09 September 2025 in the Methodist Church, Levens.

The meeting closed at 8.46 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....