

Levens Parish Council

MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 09 September 2025 in Levens Methodist Church commencing at 7.30 p.m.

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

In Attendance: M. R. Curry (Clerk) and no members of the public.

Note: The Parish Council may be referred to as the PC where appropriate in these Minutes.

38/25 Apologies for Absence: Written apologies had been received from Cllr. Forshaw.

39/25 Declarations of Interest:

No Declarations of Interest were made and the Clerk reported that no requests for dispensation had been submitted.

40/25 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chair be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 08 July 2025 as a true record.

41/25 Public Participation: No members of the public were present.

42/25 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- i) Cllr. Atfield reported attendance at the following online events:
 - Affordable Housing - 15 July: An interesting meeting; L. Smyth attended; Levens scheme was mentioned. It was confirmed that social rent was 60% of market rent; affordable rent was 80% of market rent.
 - Planning - 01 September: Hosted by W&FC Planning Officers (48 attendees). The following were noted: If a PC objects then the application must go to Committee; PC comments are reported verbatim in the Planners Reports. The categories for response are Support/Object/No Objection. Responses from PC's may be admissible after the consultation deadline has passed. Practice Notes will go on to W&FC website in respect of Certificates of Lawful Use for Children's Homes.
 - Lord Lieutenant presentation - 08 September: A constructive, non-political overview of the work of the Lieutenancy and proposals for the future.
- ii) Cllr. Rogerson reported on the following:
 - Village Hall - the Steps Group is closing down
 - Levens History Group – There is no Chair, Secretary of Treasurer and the Group will close later this year. Funds, records and archive material will be handed over to Kendal Civic Society.

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

- i) Dog Fouling: She and Cllrs. Burrow and Holmes have met with the new Dog Warden. He is to provide new stickers for lamp-posts in the worst areas. Reporting forms are now available for those wishing to submit records of dog fouling and may be found at:
<https://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/your-environment/dogs/dog-fouling/>
- ii) Waste and Recycling Services: Earlier in the day, recommendations for the harmonisation of waste and recycling services were agreed by the Council. Recommendations include:
 - The retention of a 240-litre (large) grey wheelie bin for general (non-recyclable) household waste with alternate weekly collections.
 - The replacement of blue boxes and the blue bag with two 180-litre wheelie bins for kerbside recycling with alternate weekly collections.
 - Final recommendations for the harmonisation of charges for the collection of garden waste will be made as part of the Council's budget setting process for 2026-27. Non-charging for a single green bin will be an option for consideration.
- iii) 2026-27 Budget: The Council is embarking on its budget setting process and achieving a balanced budget will be a difficult task.
- iv) Devolution for Cumbria: Decisions will be required in the coming weeks. The initiative is not supposed to impact on the delivery of current services or costs but there are concerns about how the structure will be funded.
- v) A Greening meeting on 10/11/2025 will look at the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Lowland Breeding Curlew initiative has had a very good year.

c) Police:

- i) Cumbria Policing Pledge: The Police had asked for confirmation of the local representatives in advance of the next online liaison meeting. Cllrs Battye and Forshaw represent Levens.
- ii) PFCC Property Fund: The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner has launched a fund awarding grants of up to £2,500 for initiatives that include provision to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- iii) The most recent editions of the Focus Newsletter had been circulated.
- iv) Cllr Battye reported that the Police were evident after the burglary in Greengate. Warning leaflets have been delivered for distribution.

43/25 Finance

a) Receipts: The following receipt for the period 01 July – 31 August 2025 was noted:

- i. 04/07/2025: J Thacker & Sons – car park rent: £ 80.00

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

- i) Local Government Services Pay Agreement: Councillors noted the award of an increase of £0.54p per hour backdated to April 2025 and implementation was **Approved**
- ii) M R Curry: Salary July 2025: (PC: £270.81; LCP: £251.69): £ 522.50
- iii) M R Curry: Salary August 2025: (PC: £355.58; back-pay: £57.89; LCP: £251.82; Back-pay: £47.03; Charity: £108.35; back-pay £3.89; Mileage: £32.40; Exes: £13.88) £ 870.84
- iv) Zurich Municipal: Insurance Premium (subject to confirmation): £ 484.34
The premium is for the first year of a new 3-year long term agreement and was agreed in principle. Councillors **Agreed** the Clerk's recommendation that cover should be checked and approved before the new premium be paid.
- v) T. Hecht: Website administration costs: £ 190.00
- vi) Parish Online: Digital mapping - Annual subscription: £ 45.00
- vii) Lune Valley Landscapes: Strimming etc: £ 310.00
- viii) Armstrong Watson: VAT submission Q1 2025-26: £ 120.00
- ix) Levens Village Hall: Room Hire for Levens Playgroup (grant): £ 50.00

c) Bank Reconciliation and Ring-fenced Funds at 31 August 2025: The bank reconciliation at 31 August (circulated in advance of the meeting) showed a balance of £28,086.20 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). It was **Agreed** that the CIL fund needs to be spent and that, for reasons of public safety and amenity, work from the most recent Tree Health and Safety Repot should be prioritised. Cllrs. Holmes and Mason will review the work required and make recommendations as to how to allocate the funds available.

d) Bank Mandate: The Chairman reported that he has now been approved for digital banking and Cllr Burrow is also approved. Arrangements will now be made to authorise Cllrs. Mason and Rogerson as signatories and the Clerk in an administrative capacity.

e) Governance:

- i) AGAR 2024-25: The Clerk confirmed that all documents had been submitted to the External Auditor and that he had responded to two queries to date.
- ii) Practitioners Guide – Assertion 10: New guidance has been issued regarding regulations concerning digital and data compliance. Implementation is mandatory and the 4 key areas to address are:
 - Email Management: Councils must use a domain name that it owns e.g. .og.uk and individual Councillors should also have a Council email address. Cllr. Rogerson will work with Tom Hecht to make the necessary recommendations on this.
 - Website compliance: Updates and additions to the website are required for this. The Clerk will work with Cllr. Rogerson and Tom Hecht to address these requirements.
 - Data Protection: Most of the requirements are already in place but the Clerk will review and make any updates required.
 - IT Policy: The Clerk will draft a new Policy for approval

44/25 Levens Community Project:

a) Levens Project Advisory Group: Cllr. Mason reported on the PAG meeting held on 02/09/2025 as follows:

- i. Sale of Plot 3, Church Hill: Following a request from a neighbour, it was **Agreed** to ask Andy Brayshaw to strim the site and clear it of vegetation. Agents are still to provide advice on undergrounding the overhead electricity supply and preparation of a graphic sale board.
- ii. Underhill: The Clerk has been in touch with Water Plus who will issue amended invoices for the water connections. Cllr. Mason will get costs for the trench required to take the electricity cable.
- iii. New Village Hall: There has been no recent work on site to report.

- iv. Tendering process: Further to the report in July when it was agreed to explore cost saving opportunities submitted by the ACS Partnership, the latter has submitted a Quantity Surveying and Project Management Proposal, via its Managing Director John Sharples. As part of that, ACS have highlighted issues with Building Regulations (BR) in that the original application has now been timed out and will need to be resubmitted before any revised design can go out to tender. ACS are providing additional information on what is required in this respect. Cllr Mason will also talk to Tony Hills to confirm specifications for the building slab at Underhill. It was **Agreed** that this should be done in line with current Building Regulations.
 - v. Project Management and Finance Review: The bank reconciliation at 23 August showed funds-in-hand in the current account of £30,590.86. A further sum in the region of £21,500 (Capacity Grant, bank interest and VAT refund) is due. Payment of Capacity Grant is now well overdue despite reminders from the Clerk. Cllr Battye undertook to raise this with W&FC.
Funds in the Deposit Account at 31 August stood at £1,464,716.92.
The Clerk's recommendation to transfer £15,000 from the Current Account to the Deposit Account was **Agreed**.
Cllr Mason gave an update on efforts to recover £4,176.00 due from Mr Will Pennett for the purchase of stone. The PC acknowledged that all reasonable actions had been taken to recover this sum and that further efforts would incur cost with no guarantee of success. Councillors noted that the net receipts from the sale of stone currently amounted to £148,211 and it was **Agreed** to write off the outstanding sum.
- b) To Approve payments recommended by PAG:** The following payment was **Approved** (subject to final email agreement):
- i. Water Plus – revised charges for Underhill ITRO £8.00 per month x 2 meters £ TBC

45/25 Planning Applications:

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

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Status
48.	2024/2299/FPA	Land adjacent to The Langdales	Erection of a 2-storey extension - amendment to previously approved plans.	Appeal commenced 15/05/2025. Decision Notice 29/08/25 – Appeal allowed
1.	2025/0179/HOU	Erquy, Brigsteer Road LA8 8NU	Internal & Ext alterations	No Objection submitted 15/04/2025. ACON 24/07/2025
2.	2025/1093/HOU	Greengate Hse, Levens	Convert outbuilding to small single bedroom annexe	No Objection submitted. ACON 05/08/2025
3.	2025/1210/ADV	A590 Slip Rd junction with Sampool La	Advertisement consent for directional sign on existing post	No Objection submitted. ACON 26/08/2025
4.	2025/1261/HOU	Heron'sdyke, Levens LA8 8PJ	2-storey side extension, part to be built on existing garage footprint.	No Objection submitted. ACON 27/08/2025
5	2025/1453/HOU	Brighaven, Brigsteer Rd LA8 8NT	Demolish & reinstate garage. Alts to dwelling to create attic living space	Resolved to make No Objection . Submitted 10/09/2025.

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

46/25 Levens Charity

- a) Meeting of the Appointed Trustees:** It was **Agreed** that the Appointed Trustees will meet on 14 October at 7.00 p.m. Key items are:
- i) To receive the End of Year Report for 2024-25
 - ii) To review the current investment portfolio and agree recommendations for the re-investment of a fund recently closed to the value of £3,913.97
 - iii) To receive any applications for grant from the Charity
 - iv) To review progress with closure of the Savin Brow Quarry Charity

47/25 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) Levens Traffic Management:** The following reports were noted:
- i. **Levens Lane footpath:** Two final reports from the feasibility study are awaited. Cllr. Battye will try to get these expedited.
 - ii. **Traffic Management within the village:** Cllr. Battye reported that Highways have provisionally agreed to instal a white line to prevent parking below the entrance to the Playing Fields. They have

indicated a contribution of £650.00. Cllr. Battye offered £500 from her Locality Grant which was accepted with thanks. It was **Agreed** to fund the balance from the smaller of the CIL award held as a ring-fenced fund.

- iii. **20-m.p.h. Initiative:** Notice of approval of the scheme following the extensive public consultation held in the village up to 18 July was noted and welcomed. The percentage breakdowns of in favour / not in favour etc were not correct and Cllr Rogerson undertook to get the figures clarified. The Clerk was asked to confirm whether and if so, what costs the PC is likely to face during next steps and the implementation phase.
- iv. **'Welcome to Levens' signs:** After discussion about the desirability and possible locations, it was acknowledged that Highways need to be consulted before any plans were worked up. Cllr. Battye will enquire as to protocols.

b) Parish Assets and Land

- i. **Maintenance Work Required:** The following was **Agreed**:
 - Cllr. Holmes will ask Andy Brayshaw to do a final cut and trim in October. Also to clean up the bus shelter at Levens Bridge by removing encroaching vegetation and (if possible) graffiti.
 - The Clerk will ask National Highways to confirm that the bus shelter on the A590 slip road is theirs and request maintenance work.
- c) **Community Orchard and Roadside Boundary:** Cllr. Mason reported that the bid for Capital Grant to replace the roadside wall has been submitted. W&FC has confirmed that the vegetation growing through the wall was not a hedge and removal was legitimate. The next tranche of planting will take place during the current planting season. A sign provided by W&FC will be erected.
- d) **Requests for Bench Dedications:** Councillors **Agreed** that dedications will not be permitted except in exceptional circumstances and a draft policy to this effect will be prepared. Current enquirers will be advised accordingly – one of which will be referred to the Playing Fields Committee via Cllr. Battye.
- e) **Allotments and Land Rents:** All but one allotment rents were now paid. A letter explaining the rental situation for 2026-27 has been sent and a number of tenants have committed to continue. Several tenants have asked if thistles in the adjoining field can be topped and Cllr Mason will deal with this request. Land rents and car-park rents have been paid. The car-park previously occupied by the late Mr & Mrs Edmondson has not been formally re-let. The occupants of their property will be advised that rent is due if they wish to park on the vacant plot.
- f) **Parish Emergency Plan:** Cllr. Forshaw had submitted his apologies, and an update was deferred to the next meeting.

48/25 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) 21/07/2025: W&FC confirming a CIL payment to Levens Playing Fields
- b) 01/08/2025: R Kelly: Suggestions for cost cutting on NVH project – noted with thanks
- c) 02/09/2025: I Stoddart – Promoting the Clean River Kent Campaign events
- d) Date not known – Feedback to Cllr Burrow that the defibrillator will soon need to be replaced. Cllr. Burrow undertook to make enquiries for grant funding from the British Heart Foundation and other sources.
- e) The A590 at Newby Bridge is to be closed at night for approximately three weeks.

49/25 Future Agenda Items:

- a) Follow-up on the current Agenda items but also to include:
- b) The Autumn Newsletter: to include items on:
 - Replacement Defibrillator
 - The 20-m.p.h. initiative

50/25 Date of the Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday 14 October 2025 in the Methodist Church, Levens.

The meeting closed at 9.52 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....