

Levens Parish Council

MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 14 October 2025 in Levens Methodist Church commencing at 7.30 p.m.

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

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

Note: The Parish Council may be referred to as the PC and Westmorland and Furness Council as W&FC where appropriate in these Minutes.

51/25 Apologies for Absence: All Councillors were present though Cllr. Mason requested to be excused after Item 4. There were no other apologies.

52/25 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr. Mason declared an interest in planning applications 2025/1770/FPA and 2025/1771/FPA relating to Heaves Farm, Levens to be considered at Item 8(a).

53/25 Minutes: Following an external observation, Councillors **Approved** an amendment to Minute 42/25(a)(ii) whereby Kendal Civic Society was replaced with Kendal Historical and Archaeological Society. The alteration was made and initialled by the Chair following which he was **Authorised** to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 09 September 2025 as a true record.

54/25 Public Participation: Mr R Edmundson spoke to confirm his concerns about flooding outside Quaggs Farmhouse on the road at Cotes previously reported to the PC. He believed this to be an impact of water run-off from the new developments opposite (on land sold by the Parish Council) which have disrupted and overloaded the existing drainage. Water is bubbling out of the ground in the vicinity of the car-parking space, spilling across the road and pooling outside his property. Cllr. Mason reminded all present that this issue had been identified some four to five years ago before any development on the plots had been commenced. The problem was then, and remains, that the roadside drain is not big enough to cope with the weight of water in very wet conditions and that it is finding its way to the surface as the result of a hole in the pipe. The PC had raised this at the time with the County Councillor responsible for local highway issues and been assured that it would be attended to. This clearly did not happen, and the matter is now the responsibility of W&FC. As a resident living near to the area of concern, Cllr. Battye commented that the matter needed attention and that she had reported it to Highways via HIAMS with a photograph. She has also mentioned it directly to the Head of Highways and the Area Manager. Cllr. Forshaw confirmed that two Environment Agency vans were present at the site on the worst day of the recent wet spell and cones had been placed on site. The Chair concluded that it appears that the matter has been logged, but that it needs effective follow-up to ensure that it is dealt with. Cllr. Battye will continue to liaise with Highways and check on progress. The Chair reminded attendees that any individual can report highways issues through HIAMS.

55/25 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- i) Cllr. Atfield reported attendance at the following online events:
 - Banking is Changing – 24 September: A 'special event' hosted by CALC and dealing with the evolving banking system. There was particular reference to the Unity Trust Bank ([unity.co.uk](https://www.unity.co.uk)) which aims to be community focussed and to understand the needs of local Parish Councils.
 - Standards of Conduct – 02 October: A useful refresher which raised particular questions about protocols around Declarations of Interest. The Clerk will use the feedback from the meeting to clarify the process.
 - The CALC AGM to have been held on 04 October was cancelled due to Storm Amy. It will need to be reinstated but no details have been published yet.

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

- i) Devolution: At meetings today (14 October), both Cumberland and W&FC gave their final consent to the Government's devolution proposals. These include a new, Mayor-led authority though this will not replace services currently provided by the Unitary Authorities. It will have a range of powers on strategic matters such as transport, energy and economic development and access to funding not available to the two existing councils. The Cumbria Combined Authority (CCA) will be established in early 2026, operating for a year without a Mayor, before Cumbria's first Mayoral election in May 2027.

- ii) The Community Governance Review (CGR): Following the recent Ward Boundary Review, there will now be a CGR to consider whether parish boundaries are fit for purpose, whether the number of Councillors is correct and any other comments about the parish (e.g. name, whether it should merge with another etc). The Review will be supported by a consultation lasting until 8 December 2025. Online information sessions are to be held during the week commencing 20 October.
 - iii) The Parking Review: A review to harmonise the provision of parking throughout W&F continues.
 - iv) The Local Plan: Production of the new plan continues including the development of a Design Code.
 - v) Nature Strategy Plan: W&FC has agreed a Nature Strategy which sets out a clear plan to halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity and to ensure nature recovery is embedded in all council operations. This will work in tandem with the upcoming publication of Cumbria's first Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) later this autumn. Greening Levens will host an update session on the Curlew Recovery Programme to be held on 10 November.
- c) Police:**
- i) Cumbria Policing Pledge: The next liaison meeting will be held on 20 October. Cllrs Battye and Forshaw will attend.
 - ii) Several burglaries in Levens were noted with concern.
 - iii) The most recent editions of the Focus Newsletter had been circulated.

56/25 Finance

a) Receipts: The following receipt for the period 01 September – 30 September 2025 was noted:

- i) Allotment Rent - Cash paid to bank: £ 20.00

b) Payments Required: To **Approve** the following:

- i) Zurich Municipal Annual Premium 2025-26 paid between meetings (**Ratified**): £ 484.34
- ii) M R Curry - Salary September (PC: £433.26; LCP: £95.26; Charity: £153.70
Underpaid on April cheque: £10.00; Expenses: £10.48; Mileage: £27.00 £ 729.70
- iii) HMRC - PAYE, NIC Q2 2025-26: £ 700.24
- iv) Moore – Audit Fee 2024-25: £ 756.00
- v) Cllr. R. Atfield: Expenses for Remembrance wreath: £ 19.99
- vi) Cllr. H. Burrow: Expenses for 2025 Christmas event: £ 42.77

On items 56/25(b)(v & vi) above and in the absence of other signatories, it was **Agreed** that subject to the required counter signature, Cllrs. Atfield and Burrow be authorised to sign cheques in their favour.

c) Bank Reconciliation and Ring-fenced Funds: The bank reconciliation at 30 September (previously circulated) showed a balance of £26,092.46 as evidenced by the bank statement. The Chairman was authorised to sign the bank statement accordingly. Ring-fenced funds are £7,148.74 split between Christmas Funds (£2,708.71), Woodland management (£2,200) and CIL funds (£2,240.03). As previously **Agreed**, the smaller element of the retained CIL fund will be allocated to the costs of white lining near to the Playing Fields entrance. The CIL balance will be allocated to woodland work.

d) Half-year Budget Monitoring Report: The Clerk reported on the half-yearly budget review based on figures previously circulated. His conclusion that the budget was on track with no significant exceptions was **Approved**.

e) Bank Mandate: Cllr. Burrow has completed her documentation, but nothing has been heard back from HSBC. Cllrs. Atfield and Burrow will meet and call HSBC to confirm the current status and confirm any outstanding requirements.

f) Governance

- i) Annual Governance & Accounting Report 2024-25 (AGAR): The Clerk confirmed receipt of the External Auditor Report and Certificate confirming that information in the AGAR is in accordance with the proper practices and no matters have come to the Auditor's attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.
Two matters from the Report were noted:
 - In the Auditor's view, general reserves appear to be held at a low level. This should be kept under review. The Clerk confirmed that he will do so.
 - The Auditor noted that the minute reference on Section 2 is missing one (i) and should read 23/25(b)iii. This is not a reportable issue, but references are required to be correct.
- ii) Assertion 10:
 - Email addresses: Cllr. Rogerson confirmed that he and Tom Hecht are reviewing the requirement with a view to moving to xxx.org.uk addresses for the PC and individual Councillor accounts.
 - Website compliance: The Clerk and Cllr. Rogerson confirmed that the website is generally compliant, but this is being double checked. An Accessibility Statement is being prepared.
- iii) Draft Information Technology and Freedom of Information Policies (previously circulated): It was **Agreed** to review these with a view to approval at the next meeting.

57/25 Levens Community Project:

- a) **Levens Project Advisory Group:** The Clerk reported on the PAG meeting held on 07/10/25 as follows:
- Sale of Plot 3, Church Hill: Agents are still to provide advice on undergrounding the overhead electricity supply and preparation of a graphic sale board following which a revised sale price will be agreed. Andy Brayshaw has been requested to tidy the site.
 - Underhill: Issues with costs for the new water supply appear to have been resolved. Cllr. Mason is confirming costs and timings for the trench required to take the electricity cable.
 - New Village Hall: There has been no recent work on site to report. Several sales of stone have been invoiced recently.
 - Tendering process: Meetings are to be held urgently with Tony Hills and John Sharples to confirm matters relating to planning, building regulations and revised build costs.
 - Finance Review: The bank reconciliation at 23 September showed funds-in-hand in the current account of £15,962.46. W&FC have undertaken to pay the outstanding Capacity Grant due and apologised for the delay. The Project will pay £666 towards the annual audit fee.
Funds in the Deposit Account at 30 September stood at £1,464,716.92.
- b) **To Approve payments recommended by PAG:** The following payment made between meetings was **Ratified**):
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| Water Plus – Standing Charges for Underhill | £ 82.58 |
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58/25 Planning Applications:

- a) **Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule on 14 October had been circulated. The following were of specific note:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Outcome
6.	2025/1770/FPA	Heaves Farm, Levens LA8 8DU	Extension of existing earth-banked slurry lagoon	As a Councillor, the applicant had declared an interest but had left the meeting earlier. Following consideration, it was Agreed to submit No Objection to this application.
7.	2025/1771/FPA	Heaves Farm, Levens LA8 8DU	2 new hardstanding areas. Retrospective for installation of u/ground water storage tank	As a Councillor, the applicant had declared an interest but had left the meeting earlier. Following consideration, it was Agreed to submit No Objection to this application.
8.	2025/1913/PIP	Rockfield Stables, Levens LA8 8NU	Permission in Principle for residential development	See Note below

NOTE RE: 2025/1913/PIP (Ref 8 above): There was considerable discussion about the appropriateness of this development. It was noted that the field was not in the current Local Plan for residential development and that there were planning anomalies connected with the site and the application. The planning consultant had suggested a number of alleged benefits to the local community but there was no indication that the proposal met the need for lower value houses and references to supporting the local school were irrelevant as the school was nearing capacity. No investment has been made in the local infrastructure lately, and the application did not address current issues including an overloaded sewage system, problems with water supply, a disjointed electricity supply, traffic matters and a lack of public transport. Environmental concerns would include a loss of biodiversity and a potential increase in the likelihood of flooding as run off from this site. It was **Agreed** that the PC should object to this request for permission in principle and the Clerk was asked to prepare and circulate a draft to this effect.

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

59/25 Levens Charity

- a) **Meeting of the Appointed Trustees:** The Secretary to the Charity confirmed that the Appointed Trustees had met immediately prior to this meeting of the Parish Council and discussed as follows:
- End of Year Report for 2024-25: The Charity had a gross value of £172,907 - £722 less than the previous year. The value at 30/09/2025 had however risen to £174,627. Disposable income at the end of the year stood at £35,874. No applications for grant are currently pending. The Appointed Trustees had reviewed the current investments and the PC, in its capacity as Sole Trustee, **Agreed** with their recommendation that investments should remain as they are. The Secretary will circulate the full end of year report to all Parish Councillors as representatives of the Sole Trustee.
 - Savin Brow Quarry Charity: The closure of investment funds nears completion despite a lengthy process with Black Rock. Once that fund is closed, the Charity Commission will be advised that all assets have been transferred to the Levens Charity and be requested to remove Savin Brow from the Register of Charities. Its current gross value is £3,064.10.
 - Funds for reinvestment: The Appointed Trustees noted that a combined sum of £4,960.32 is available for reinvestment representing capital investments that have been closed or transferred

from Savin Brow. The Secretary has undertaken to prepare a paper on options and circulate as the basis of a decision to re-invest.

60/25 The Village Defibrillator: Cllr. Burrow confirmed that the existing defibrillator is nearing the end of its life. Research has identified an appropriate replacement with a warranty of 8 years to include provision for use with younger children. The cost will be approximately £1,650 + VAT and it was **Agreed** that this should be paid for by the Charity. A central location is essential in the vicinity of the shop/bus shelter/ telephone box. Enquiries will be made about the status of the latter, and a final decision will be confirmed in due course.

61/25 Autumn / Winter Newsletter: Dates for publication and content were confirmed. Individual Councillors agreed to forward items to the Clerk for inclusion.

62/25 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** The following reports were noted:
 - i. **Levens Lane footpath:** This is on the list of Projects for potential support from W&FC CIL funds.
 - ii. **Traffic Management in the village:** Arrangements for funding the white lining work were confirmed.
 - iii. **20-m.p.h. Initiative:** The proposal for Levens will go to the Locality Board for approval following which there will be a statutory consultation.
 - iv. **'Welcome to Levens' signs:** Highways have confirmed that there will be a cost associated with this proposal and Cllr. Battye will undertake further liaison with them.
- b) **Parish Assets and Land**
 - i. **Maintenance Work Required:** The following were noted:
 - Andy Brayshaw has been requested to do a final cut and strim in October.
 - National Highways have acknowledged a request to tidy the bus-shelter on the A590 slip road.
- c) **Community Orchard and Roadside Boundary:** The Clerk confirmed that he and Cllr. Battye had met the W&FC Officer on site and explained plans for completion. She had expressed pleasure at the progress made to date and proposals for completion.
- d) **Requests for Bench Dedications:** Recent requests have been attended to as previously confirmed. It was **Agreed** that a revised draft policy would be prepared for approval.
- e) **Allotments and Land Rents:** All but one allotment rent were now paid. Payment for the car-park site opposite Quaggs Farmhouse is now up to date.
- f) **Levens Parish Emergency Plan (LEAP):** Cllr. Forshaw reported that he is responding to questions relating to his recent application for grant aid for emergency equipment. Also, that he is promoting a free community session for residents to learn basic Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) which will be available in the New Year.

63/25 Correspondence Received: Other than the routine receipt of communications from regional agencies, (circulated as appropriate) the following correspondence was noted:

- a) 30/09/2025: CALC - Suggesting Cllrs. might like to register to receive CALC communications.
- b) 01/10/2025: Cumbria White Tailed Eagle Project - Consultation open to 31 October
- c) 01/10/2025: LDNPA - Liaison meeting 21 October Windermere
- d) 03/10/2025: W&FC – A reminder about weight limits on Brigsteer and Underbarrow bridges
- e) 07/10/2025: Rosie Brown – Promoting the 10th Anniversary of KEY on 29 October
- f) 13/10/2025: B. Hammond – Blocked drains at Lanefoot Cottages (to be reported)

64/25 Future Agenda Items:

- a) Follow-up on the current Agenda items but also to include:
- b) Approval of Draft Policies: Freedom of Information, Information Technology, Dedications.

65/25 Date of the Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday 11 November 2025 in the Methodist Church, Levens.

The meeting closed at 9.59 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....