

Levens Parish Council

MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 10 February 2026 in Levens Methodist Church commencing at 7.30 p.m.

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

In Attendance: M. R. Curry (Clerk) and eleven members 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.

93/25 Apologies for Absence: Written apologies had been received from Cllrs. Forshaw and Rogerson.

94/25 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chair be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 13 January 2026 as a true record.

95/25 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation: No declarations of interest were submitted and no requests for dispensation had been received.

96/25 Public Participation: Eleven members of the public were in attendance and raised concerns about the proposal for the development of (approximately) 54 houses off Greengate. A resident's group has been formed and is gathering support for an objection to an application if and when one is submitted. Many concerns were expressed including additional traffic, inadequacy of road access into the village, flooding, sewage and school capacity. The strong view was that the current infrastructure is not capable of supporting significant new development. The potential manipulation of the number of affordable houses to be provided through offsetting to other locations was noted as a concern to be monitored. The status of the Local Plan and the shortfall in housing supply in relation to current targets was discussed. It was noted that planners have a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It was stressed that decisions in respect of new development do not lie with the Parish Council but also that, if backed by local opinion, it would prepare and submit an objection. It was noted that considerable research has already been done into the reasons and process for objection and that a review of the Parish Plan might be considered. The Chair thanked all contributors for expressing their opinions on the Greengate proposal which would be revisited at Item 8(c)(i).

97/25 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings: No external meetings had been attended by Parish Councillors.

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

- i) **Community Governance Review:** The first phase report had been published which did not contain any recommendations for Levens either in respect of parish boundaries or Councillor numbers. A second phase consultation is underway focusing on those Parishes where changes have been proposed.
- ii) **Budget:** The 3-year Funding Settlement from central government is challenging and hard decisions will be taken at local level as a result. The Council Tax increase for 2026-27 will be at its maximum 4.99%. Proposals for charges for emptying green bins (garden waste), increases in car parking charges and other service areas are being recommended.
- iii) **Dog Fouling:** Reports of dog fouling have increased recently. Cllr Battye has met with the Dog Warden, and he is aware of local concerns. Report cards for public use were distributed.
- iv) **The push to install publicly accessible electric vehicle charging points** is ongoing and the Parish Council is encouraged to make any suggestions as to locations.
- v) **The formation of the new Cumbria Combined Authority** continues.

c) Police: The local Newsletters have been circulated as published. Cllr Battye had met PCSO Park when the latter was making an informal visit to the village. It was suggested that informal visits might be publicised by the Police in advance.

98/25 Finance

- a) Receipts and Payments to 31 January 2026:** Receipts and payments since the last meeting were noted on the bank reconciliation (circulated). Receipts amounted to £1,789.31 via wayleave payments from ENWL (£117.31) and £1,672.00 grant for emergency kit from the Cumbria Foundation. The Clerk confirmed that he had received notification of Cllr. Battye's Locality Grant of £500 to be allocated to the white lining scheme on Levens Lane.
- b) Payments Required:** The following payments made by agreement between meetings were **Ratified:**

- i) Stramongate Press – Printing (community consultation via extra Newsletter) £ 365.00
- The following payments were **Approved**:
- ii) M R Curry – December (PC: £513.61; LCP: £142.86; Charity: £20.97; Mileage: £30.60) Total: £ 708.04
- iii) Armstrong Watson – VAT Admin fee Q3 2025-26: £ 150.00
- c) **Bank Reconciliation and Ring-Fenced Funds:**
 - i) Bank Reconciliation: The bank reconciliation at 31 January (previously circulated) showed a balance of £25,931.84 as evidenced by the bank statement. Unpresented cheques amounted to £365.00p. The Chairman was **Authorised** to sign the bank statement.
 - ii) Ring-fenced funds: The R-F funds have increased to £8,591.28 with the receipt of £1,672.00 allocated to the Emergency Planning initiative. Otherwise, Christmas Funds (£2,479.25), woodland management (£2,200) and CIL funds (£2,240.03) remain as before.
- d) **Precept 2026-27:** The Clerk confirmed that a request for Precept had been submitted to W&FC in the sum of £16,174.
- e) **Bank Mandate:** The Chair reported that work towards establishing the electronic payments system continues.
- f) **Governance: Assertion 10:** The Clerk confirmed that Assertion 10 Policy documents have been uploaded to the website. However, no further progress with setting up compliant email addresses has been possible and there remains uncertainty about the accessibility status of the PC webpages. Tom Hecht has now advised that, having moved away, he is no longer available for technical support to the community website. It was **Agreed** that the Clerk should now take some external advice on the technical requirements for Assertion 10 compliance. The possibility of using CIL money to support this was suggested.

99/25 Levens Community Project:

- a) **Levens Project Advisory Group:** Cllr. Mason reported on the PAG meeting held on 03/02/2026 as follows:
 - i) Underhill:
 - Foundation slab: Final tenders for the laying of the foundation slab are awaited. The Clerk will advise W&FC of this next step.
 - Electricity supply: The trench for the supply duct will be dug as soon as contractor availability allows.
 - ii) New Village Hall: There has been no recent work on site to report. TH has submitted an updated application for Building Regulations and the outcome is awaited.
- b) **Finance Report:** The bank reconciliation at 23 January 2026 showed funds-in-hand in the current account of £28,344.88. Funds in the Deposit Account at 31 January stood at £1,490,672.95. An instruction to HSBC to transfer £15,000 from the current account to the deposit account was approved and signed.
The following payments made between meetings were **Ratified**:
 - i) M R Curry: Reimbursement of Building Regs Fee: £ 261.00
 - ii) HMRC: VAT Payment Q3 2025-26: £ 265.66
 The following payment having fallen due since publication of the Agenda was **Approved**:
 - iii) Milne Moser: Payment on account for Wayleave Agreement, Underhill Electricity: £ 200.00

100/25 Planning Applications:

- a) **Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule to 05 February 2026 had been circulated. No new planning applications had been received
- b) **2025/2178/OPA:** Levens Beck LA8 8PN: The Decision Notice (refusal) was noted. This had previously been reported as approved, and it was agreed to double check that previous report.
- c) **Other planning matters:**
 - i) **Land off Greengate, Levens, LA8 8EY:** Note was taken of the comments made by local residents earlier in the meeting. It was also noted that at the date of the PC meeting 93 responses to the local consultation initiated by the Parish Council had been received of which 90 were opposed to the development. It was **Agreed** that if a planning application is submitted then a consultation event in the Village Hall should be organised to take local feedback. It was further **Agreed** that representatives of local agencies such as United Utilities, Highways, Education, Environment Agency etc should be invited and to write to them in advance to bring a possible meeting to their attention. The Clerk reported that to date, none of the W&FC Officers who had been emailed about this development had yet responded and it was Agreed to follow up.
 - ii) **Nanny Pie Lane:** The Clerk confirmed that a development at Nanny Pie Lane had been reported to the W&FC Enforcement Team and that a Case Number had been allocated.

101/25 Levens Charity

- a) **Savin Brow Quarry Charity (SBQC):** Councillors noted that the Charity Commission has confirmed the removal of SBQC from the Register of Charities.
- b) **Annual Returns:** The Clerk reported that Annual Returns for Levens Charity and SBQC for the 2024-25 financial year had been submitted to and acknowledged by the Charity Commission.
- c) **Funds for reinvestment:** A cheque for £6,500.00 was signed for investment in the M&G Charity Multi Asset Fund.
- d) **Donation to Levens Charity:** On behalf of the Sole Trustee, Councillors noted with gratitude a donation from the late Eileen Jackson of Levens amounting in total to £172.75.

102/25 Annual Parish Meeting (APM): The Clerk confirmed that it is a statutory requirement to hold the Annual Parish Meeting between 01 March and 01 June. In the light of possible public consultation on the development of land off Greengate, it was **Agreed** to consider the content and the date of the meeting at the next PC meeting on 10 March. This is likely to mean that the APM will not be held as is usual on the third Tuesday in March (17/03/2026) but deferred to a date before 01 June to be confirmed.

103/25 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) **Levens Traffic Management:** The following reports were noted:
 - i) **Levens Lane footpath:** Cllr. Battye is to meet a senior Highways Officer shortly to assess the outcome of the Feasibility Study and agree next steps.
 - ii) **Traffic Management in the village:** Following a note from Highways enclosing a plan of the proposed white lining and a request to confirm the location, Cllrs Atfield and Burrow had revisited the site to check. It was their opinion that the Highways plan was not correct and that the white line should be moved south by 7 or 8 metres. They had marked the correct position on a photograph. It was **Agreed** that the Clerk should respond to Highways confirming the correct location and attach the photograph for clarity.
 - iii) **20-m.p.h. Initiative:** Cllr. Battye reported that the Traffic Regulation Order has been agreed and the scheme is now legal. Road signs will go up as soon as possible.
- b) **Other Highways Matters:**
 - i) Concerns were expressed about safety on the right turn at the bottom of Levens Lane onto the A590 slip road. Cllr. Battye felt that this would be improved by repainting the road markings and will recommend this to Highways as well as entering it on HIAMS.
 - ii) Cllr. Holmes reported that empty alcohol bottles have once again begun to appear in a ditch on Sampool Lane. It was **Agreed** that the occurrence should be regarded as fly-tipping and reported on HIAMS.
- c) **Defibrillator:** The 90-day consultation period has started, and notices are on the phone box which Cllr. Burrow has cleaned. The outcome of the consultation is now awaited and there are some indications of a favourable response.
- d) **Levens Emergency Action Plan (LEAP):** In the absence of Cllr. Forshaw there was no update other than the previously noted receipt of grant from the Cumbria Foundation to be applied to acquiring emergency kit to be used locally.
- e) **Parish Assets and Land**
 - i) Community Orchard and roadside boundary: Following receipt of the RPA grant, Cllr. Mason is awaiting contractor feedback on timescales for the work on the wall. He will write to the administrators of the Orchard grant to explain progress and investigate the planting of the final 10 trees next back-end when work on the wall and the electricity duct to Underhill houses has been completed.
Cllr. Battye mentioned a planting for pollinators scheme and that the picnic site might be a good location for such an initiative. It was **Agreed** to consider this at the next meeting.
 - ii) Street Light Agreement – A revised Agreement amending the original had been received from W&FC which correctly identified the streetlights to be transferred. Cllrs Atfield and Burrow were **Authorised** to sign the Deed of Transfer. A resident on Greengate asked if it was necessary to have the streetlights on all night and it was **Agreed** to write to W&FC to clarify the current position.
 - iii) Allotments: Cllr. Mason is progressing the new water pipes previously agreed and funded from Cllr Battye's Locality Grant.
 - iv) Gilpin Bridge Footpath – The diverted footpath has been reported on HIAMS and acknowledged. The Clerk feels that this matter should be considered by a dedicated Footpath Officer but one has not yet been identified. Parking at the garage showroom at Gilpin Bridge where the road can be blocked on occasion was raised once again. The Clerk will refer this on to HIAMS.
 - v) Lune Valley Landscapes have recently submitted a quote for maintenance work in 2026-27 and the Clerk will forward this for consideration

104/25 Correspondence Received: Other than the routine receipt of communications from regional agencies, (circulated as appropriate) the following correspondence was noted:

- Royal Garden Party: It was **Agreed** not to make a recommendation this year.
- Receipt of a news release from W&FC announcing significant government funding to investigate improvements to local bus services including the 530 Cartmel-Allithwaite-Grange-Levens-Kendal. It was **Agreed** to mention this in the next Newsletter. On the timing of the Newsletter, the Chair agreed to write to the organisers of the Parish Magazine to see if the PC edition could be inserted in March (rather than February)

105/25 Future Agenda Items: Follow-up on the current Agenda items but also to include:

- a) The Brigsteer Road Picnic Site
- b) Proposals for the PC Newsletter
- c) The Annual Parish Meeting
- d) Levens Beck planning application resolution.

106/25 Date of the Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday 10 March 2026 in the Methodist Church, Levens.

The meeting closed at 9.28 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....