

# Levens Parish Council

## **MINUTES of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 13 May 2025 in Levens Methodist Church commencing at 7.30 p.m.**

**Present:** Cllrs. R. Atfield, H. Burrow, J. Battye (and as W&F Councillor), D. Forshaw, K. Holmes, R. Mason, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy

**In Attendance:** M. R. Curry (Clerk) and two members of the public.

**01/25 Chair of the Parish Council 2025-26:** Having indicated a willingness to stand, Cllr. Atfield was proposed as Chair of Levens Parish Council by Cllr. Mason, seconded by Cllr. Battye. There being no other nominations, Cllr. Atfield was elected unanimously and signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

**02/25 Apologies for Absence:** All Councillors were in attendance and no other apologies had been received.

**03/25 Vice-Chair 2025-26:** Having indicated a willingness to stand, Cllr. Mason was proposed as Vice-Chair of the Parish Council by Cllr. Atfield, seconded by Cllr. Burrow. There being no other nominations, Cllr. Mason was elected unanimously and signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

**04/25 Minutes:** It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 08 April 2025 as a true record.

**05/25 Declarations of Interest:** No Declarations of Interest were submitted.

### **06/25 Appointment of Representatives:**

The following appointments to positions or as representatives on external bodies were confirmed:

<b>Position</b>	<b>Representative(s)</b>
a) Highwayman	Cllr. M Willacy
b) Village Institute	Cllr. D. Rogerson
c) Levens Playing Fields	Cllr. K. Holmes
d) Woodlands Officer	Cllr. K. Holmes
e) Levens Charity Appointed Trustees	Cllrs. R. Atfield, H. Burrow, R. Mason
f) Footpath Officer	Cllr. J. Battye
g) Land Registry	Cllr. R. Mason
h) CALC	Cllrs. R. Atfield, D. Rogerson
i) Allotments	Cllrs. H. Burrow, R. Mason
j) Maintenance Working Group	Cllrs. H. Burrow, K. Holmes
k) A590 Working Group	Cllrs. H. Burrow, K. Holmes
l) Levens Community Project	Cllrs. H. Burrow, R. Mason
m) Levens Traffic Management Group	Cllrs. H. Burrow, D. Rogerson, M. Willacy
n) Greening Campaign Coordinator	Cllr. J. Battye
o) Community Emergency Plan	Cllrs. D. Forshaw
p) Website Working Group	Cllrs. R. Atfield, H. Burrow, D. Rogerson

**07/25 Meeting Dates 2025-26:** The following meeting dates were **Agreed**:

**2025:** 10 June (brief formal meeting); 08 July; 09 September; 14 October; 11 November

**2026:** 13 January; 10 February; 10 March; 14 April; 12 May.

It was confirmed that the informal village tour would take place on 10 June immediately after a brief formal meeting to be convened at 7.00 p.m. to sign off the Annual Report (AGAR).

**08/25 Public Participation:** No matters were raised by the public.

### **09/25 Reports:**

#### **a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:**

- Cllr. Rogerson had attended a BT Digital Voice briefing session which had suggested that the switch-over was work in progress but unlikely to occur until the Autumn.
- Cllrs Rogerson and Atfield had attended W&FC's on-line Waste and Recycling Engagement session on 24 April. This relayed progress to a more streamlined system including the combination of plastic and cardboard, but with glass remaining separate. There will be a new public consultation on options in June followed by further engagement sessions. Councillors will monitor progress.

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

- W&FC had had its Annual Meeting in the previous week.

- ii. W&FC are issuing the 'raw' list following its Call for Sites in the developing Local Plan. The Clerk had sent a link, and the list will go on the W&FC website on Friday. Cllr. Battye stressed that this is purely the first tranche of sites for potential development; some may be dropped as inappropriate and all will be subject to local consultation. W&FC will announce next steps in respect of the list.
  - iii. The consultation on the review of ward boundaries is now closed and will be subject to analysis before the final decisions are made.
  - iv. W&FC is holding planning training sessions for its councillors, and Cllr. Battye has attended. She has asked if these can be made available to Parish Councils. Councillors expressed some frustration with the current system and ventured the opinion that there appeared to be problems with both workload and interpretation of government policies.
  - v. Greening Levens will be holding a coffee morning on 07 June to promote local greening initiatives including Cold to Cosy, composting, E.V. charging options and nature recovery. Cllr. Battye will also promote the public consultation on the 20-m.p.h. proposal and make available the posters and other documents as supplied by W&FC.
  - vi. Cllr. Burrow reported a re-occurrence of rats in the village. This has been reported to the Environmental Protection Team, but they have responded that it is up to residents to implement control measures in the first instance.
- c) **W&FC Lighting Policy:** Councillors referred to the options proposed by W&FC for the future of street lighting as follows:
- Option 1: To transfer all Parish or Town Council owned footway lighting to W&FC.
- Option 2: PCs to retain existing footway lighting and continue to act as their own Lighting Authority.
- It was **Agreed** unanimously to submit a response in favour of Option 1.
- The second question posed by W&FC was that where footway lighting is transferred, W&FC will look to invest into that stock to comply with the requirements of the revised Highways and Local Lighting Policy. They asked which type of "Switching" would most likely benefit the parish:
- Option 1: Dimming 50% (2100 - 0600hrs)
- Option 2: Part Night Switch Off (0000 - 0500hrs)
- Following considerable discussion about the pros and cons of both, it was **Agreed** that for reasons of public safety and security the Parish Council should elect for Option 1 (dimming to 50% between 2100-0600 hrs). The Clerk was asked to submit these responses to W&FC on the pro forma supplied.
- d) **Police:** Cllrs Forshaw and Battye had attended the on-line Cumbria Constabulary Neighbourhood Policing Pledge meeting on 29 April which had been constructive and informative. Police representatives had reinforced their commitment to community policing and will follow up this initial meeting with next step proposals.

## 10/25 Finance

- a) **Receipts** – Councillors noted the following receipts for the period 01 – 30 April 2025:
- |                                      |             |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| i. Allotment Rents – various tenants | £ 300.00    |
| ii. Car Park Rent                    | £ 20.00     |
| iii. Precept 2025-26                 | £ 15,741.00 |
- b) **Payments Required:** The following payments (including those notified since publication of the Agenda) were **Approved**:
- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| i. M R Curry: Salary April 2025: (PC: £389.40; LCP: £310.50; Charity: £16.93<br>Mileage: £16.20; Expenses: £10.98) Total: | £ 734.01 |
| ii. CALC – Annual Subscription:   | £ 325.37 |
| iii. Mitchinsons Accountants (Payroll Administration 2024-25):  | £ 240.00 |
- c) **Bank Reconciliation** and report on Ring-Fenced Funds at 30 April 2025: The bank statement at 30 April showed a balance of £32,757.76 as evidenced by the bank reconciliation. 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:** Appropriate forms authorising the move to digital banking have been completed and submitted to HSBC. A full application on behalf of all mandate holders will be submitted once the authorisation is acknowledged.
- e) **Annual Governance and Accounting Report (AGAR) 2024-25:** The Clerk reported that arrangements for the completion of the Internal Audit were in progress. The sign-off of the AGAR is scheduled for 10 June at a short formal meeting before the annual village tour. The following documents will be circulated beforehand for approval at that meeting:
- i. The Asset Register
  - ii. The Risk Register
  - iii. Financial Regulations

## 11/25 Levens Community Project

- a) **Levens Community Project Advisory Group (PAG):** Following a meeting of PAG on 06 May, Cllr. Mason reported as follows:
- i. Sale of Plot 3, Church Road: The agents are preparing a new sales promotion, and an artist's impression of the finished property will be commissioned. It was **Agreed** to authorise sale at Offers Above £125,000. Armitstead Barnett will be asked for an opinion on the benefits of undergrounding the electricity supply currently passing by cable over the property.
  - ii. Underhill: The water supply has now been connected by United Utilities. The Environment Agency has issued the permit authorising the trench works for the electricity cable. Timing of this work will be governed by the results of a breeding bird survey.
  - iii. New Village Hall:
    - Quotes from contractors – Tony Hills is to send revised specifications to a further three contractors together with an invitation to tender.
    - Recent works – Leggio blocks for the freestanding retaining wall have been delivered to site. Tim Thacker is doing preliminary marking out of levels but has recommended that Spatial Data are commissioned to confirm the specifications. R G Parkins (Civil Engineers to the Project) are being consulted about the revised specifications.
    - Sale of Stone – There have been no transactions since the previous report.
    - Insurance: It had been recommended that insurance cover for the Project is reviewed with the current insurers and consideration given to any additional or specialist cover. This course of action was **Agreed**.
  - iv. Project Management and Review of Finance: The Clerk had discussed funding options for the affordable homes with Kate Skillicorn (Housing Development Officer at W&FC) on 30 April. KS had advised the Project to make a formal approach based on financial evidence. Updating the quotes for the construction phases at Underhill and the Village Institute are essential in this context. KS had also suggested a discussion with Homes England to explore whether their position in respect of Registered Providers has altered. It was **Agreed** to liaise with Lorraine Smyth (ACTION for Communities in Cumbria) for any update on Homes England. Given the extent to which the external economic environment has changed, it was generally agreed that a strategic review of all the options available for the affordable housing would be appropriate and to include W&FC in this discussion. On finance, Owen Malton, Mike Dyer and the Clerk will meet on 15 May to commence the update of the Business Plan to provide the necessary financial context for the matters discussed above.
- The most recent bank reconciliation for the current account had been circulated prior to the meeting. Funds in Hand at 23 April 2025 were £20,208.95p on the current account and £1,507,837.87 in the deposit account.

b) **Payments Required:** There were no payments recommended for authorisation.

## 12/25 Planning Applications:

- a) **Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule on 12 May had been circulated and the following were noted:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Status
43	SL/2022/0074	Levens Lane	Footpath	The date for submission of detailed plans has been extended to 31 December 2025.
<b>Applications 2024-25</b>				
12	SL/2022/0950	Bridge End Garage	Discharge of conditions	Discharge of conditions 5 & 6 still to be determined
29	2024/0232/FPA	Lakesway Holiday Home & Lodge Park	Leisure and spa facility	Application approved by Planning Committee on 09 Jan. Decision still showing as pending
43	2024/0361/FPA	Levens Village Shop	First floor extension	Appeal in process against refusal of 2024/0361/APP
47	2024/2242/FPA	Fiddlers Croft, Church Road	Removal of Condition 9 – habitation of lower ground floor	Appeal against refusal commenced 25/02/25. To be determined
48	2024/2299/FPA	Land adjacent to the Langdales	Var of Condition 1 under approved application SL/2019/0735	Application refused at Planning Committee 20/04/2025

49	2025/0538/LDPR	1 Vicarage Rd Levens LA8 8PY	Lawful Dev Cert (LDC) for use of a dwelling house as a care home.	Objection submitted 16/04/25. With planning officer for determination. Target decision date is shown as 15/05/2025
<b>Applications 2025-26</b>				
1	2025/0179/HOU	Erquy, Brigsteer Rd, LA8 8NU	Internal and external alterations. No objection submitted	Officer consideration Pending

**b) Other Planning Matters:**

- i. It was noted that an 'A' board promoting Lakesway Holiday Homes had appeared on the verge by Levens Bridge secured by chain to a lamp-post. Councillors undertook to monitor this.
- ii. Thanks were expressed to Cllr. Holmes for representing the Parish Council at Planning Committee in respect of land adjoining The Langdales.
- iii. Attention was drawn to the excavation of a large area now being used for the storage of containers on Pigwilly Lane. It was **Agreed** to refer this to Enforcement.

**13/25 Levens Charity:** The Clerk reported as follows:

- a) **End of Year Fund Values:** The combined values at 31 March 2025 were £172,907.36. The figure at 31 March 2024 had been £173,609.00. The following payment from the Charity was **Approved**:  
James Senior Contracting: Rebuild northern boundary wall, Brigsteer Road Picnic site: £1,848.00
- b) **Progress with the wind-up of the Savin Brow Quarry Charity:** M&G Holdings Ltd had confirmed the transfer to Levens Charity of the Savin Brow fund value held by them of £1,798.70. A formal request has been made for the transfer of funds from Black Rock to the Levens Charity. This value is likely to be in the region of £300.00. On 31 March 2025, there was £1,139.37p of Savin Brow funds in the HSBC Deposit Account and the final figure will be transferred when both investment funds have been closed.
- c) **To Confirm Arrangements for the next meeting of the Appointed Trustees:** The Clerk confirmed that there were no applications for the Trustees to consider nor any major decisions to be made. He proposed that, in the light of end of year fund values reported (above) and subject to the production and circulation of an end of year report, Trustees might consider it unnecessary to have a formal Spring meeting. On behalf of the Sole Trustee, Councillors **Agreed** this proposal.

**14/25 Parish Website:** Cllr. Rogerson reported that was now able to make payments to the hosting companies for website administration. It is approaching a busy time for the upload of documents in respect of the AGAR. In respect of payments for additional work, the Chairman said that it was his understanding that Tom Hecht would log his work and undertook to speak with him to confirm the current position.

**15/25 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda:** The following reports were noted:

- a) Levens Traffic Management:
  - i. Levens Lane footpath: Cllr. Battye reported that final survey work is to be completed in the feasibility study which would then be reviewed once finalised.
  - ii. Traffic Management within the village: Highways have now provided a fourth cone and have confirmed that they are monitoring the effects of this temporary road management initiative. Cllr. Battye indicated that the outcome may suggest a case for improvements in which case a funding allocation will need to be confirmed.
  - iii. 20-m.p.h. Initiative: Although precise details are confidential for the time being, there is to be a formal consultation with the local community and supporting publicity material will be provided by W&FC.
- b) Parish Assets and Land
  - i) Brigsteer Road Site: Cllr. Mason reported that the walling work is complete, and Councillors praised the quality of the work. Cllr. Mason was thanked for overseeing this project.
  - ii) Coronation Orchard: Cllr. Mason had updated Councillors in an email of 13 April about significant progress in developing the site. Although it remains work in progress, the site has been levelled, harrowed and seeded. An application for grant will be made to the RPA to restore the roadside retaining wall which had been disrupted by self-set sycamores. The removal of these has led to a complaint to W&FC and this is being dealt with. In the meantime, 8 apple and 2 pear trees had been procured from the South Lakeland Orchard Group (SLOG) and planted, each with a guard to protect against rabbit and deer browsing. SLOG had recommended planting half the trees now and half in the autumn and will supply further trees then. Several damson trees will also be planted to add local variety. Councillors were very pleased with the results so far thanked Cllr. Mason for his efforts in progressing this. The Clerk had sent an update to W&FC for inclusion in their Newsletter. It was **Agreed** to write to SLOG to thank them for their help and provision of trees.

- iii) Maintenance work required: Cllr. Holmes reported that Andy Brayshaw is available, and it was **Agreed** to ask him to cut the grass around the picnic table on the Brigsteer Road site. Verge cutting will be left until June.
- c) Allotments and land rents: The Clerk reminded Councillors of the VAT advice received and that it was also possible that the rent of the site might be increased. It was **Agreed** that VAT would have to be charged and that the Clerk should write to tenants to explain the situation for the 2026-27 year.
- d) Dog fouling: Cllr Battey will put the W&FC officer in touch with Cllr. Burrow who will explore what resources are available to heighten awareness of this problem including bespoke posters. It was suggested that an 'A' board, moveable from one place to another might act as a clear reminder of responsibilities. Cllr. Holmes thought he might have one and will check.
- e) Parish Emergency Plan: Cllr. Forshaw reported on good progress with development of the Plan. He is enlisting help from volunteers and has approached Levens Good Neighbours who are keen to be involved, and Cllr. Mason had agreed to be involved as a local farmer. Cllr. Forshaw is shortly to have a meeting on possible funding for emergency kit bags and Cllr Burrow is exploring the local electricity zones with a local representative of ENWL. The Plan is not yet ready for publication but should be once Version 1.1 is finished and agreed.

**16/25 Correspondence:** In addition to the routine circulation of matters from CALC and other Agencies, the following items (not otherwise dealt with in the meeting) had been circulated to Councillors:

- a) 28/04/2025: Via CALC (circulated to Members for information on 29/04/2025): H. M. Government is considering a report entitled "Housing: An Effective Way to Sustain our Rural Communities" which states that: 'The percentage of second homes should not be more than 20 per cent as this appears to affect the sustainability of any village.' This is for information only at this stage.
- b) 28/04/2025: W&FC: Street Name/Number Section suggesting address names for Underhill. These were deemed inappropriate and further thought will be given.
- c) 29/04/2025: CALC - Notice of AGM 04/10/2025, Braithwaite
- d) 13/05/2025: Neil Munro - Lake District Ultra Challenge 7-8 June. Passing through Levens.

**17/25 Future Agenda Items:**

- a) It was noted that the next edition of the Parish Council Newsletter would need to be ready for distribution by the end of June. Otherwise, in addition to follow-up on current items, items for the July Agenda will include:
  - i. The Local Plan (Call for Sites)
  - ii. Dog Fouling
  - iii. The 20-m.p.h. initiative

**18/25 Date of the Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be a brief formal meeting to commence at 7.00 p.m. in the Methodist Church on 10 June to sign off the Annual Report (AGAR). Thereafter the informal annual village tour will take place. The next Ordinary Meeting following will take place on 08 July at 7.30 p.m. in the Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 9.51 p.m.

Signed ..... (Chairman)      Date.....