

Levens Parish Council

MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 08 October 2024 in Levens Methodist Church commencing at 7.30 p.m.

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

In Attendance: M. R. Curry (Clerk). One member of the public (Mr. David Forshaw) was present, but see Minute 60/24 below.

59/24 Apologies for Absence: Apologies had been received from Cllr. J. Battye and PCSO Jayne Park.

60/24 Co-option to the Parish Council: The Clerk reported that following the receipt of Expressions of Interest and subsequent interviews, Councillors had, on the basis of a ballot, agreed to recommend the co-option of David Forshaw to the Parish Council. The Chairman put this recommendation to the meeting, and it was **Agreed** unanimously to invite him to become a co-opted member. Being present, David Forshaw accepted the invitation and took his place as a co-opted Member of the Council. He signed a Declaration of Acceptance and undertook to complete a Declaration of Interests form.

61/24 Declarations of Interest: No Declarations of Interest were submitted. Cllr. Burrow raised a query about the correct procedure for raising Declarations of Interest and the Clerk undertook to confirm the process.

62/24 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 10 September 2024 as a true record.

63/24 Public Participation: By the time this item was reached, there were no members of the public present.

64/24 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- i. Cllr. Atfield had attended the Highways Drop-in session at Kendal Town Hall that morning. This was a consultative exercise to take soundings on various matters of Highways management including street lighting, the provision of support for local verge trimming and lengthsman, winter road management (including proposals for gritting) and the 20-mph initiative. It was the intention to amalgamate comments at the end of the process and incorporate into an updated agreement with Parish Councils. On the 20-mph scheme, Cllr Burrow had noted that Levens was to be considered for the 2nd tranche roll-out. The recent appearance of speed strips at various locations in the village were assumed to be connected to the scheme. She expressed concern that local residents had not been properly consulted on the proposal and that consultation on the principle should precede the drawing up of plans and works connected with that phase. Cllr. Rogerson said that it was his understanding that plans were prepared before consultation but that this approach does seem illogical. Cllr. Burrow agreed and that this approach risked wasting significant sums of money if detailed plans were drawn up only for the initiative to be rejected by local people. Cllr. Burrow wished her objection to the process to be minuted.
- ii. The Clerk referenced recent correspondence about arrangements for Remembrance Day which were not considered relevant to the local event.

b) Westmorland & Furness Council (W&FC): Cllr Battye had presented her apologies, and, in her absence, the following matters were raised:

- i. Cllr Battye has asked for an indication of schemes that might benefit from the £500 Member Grant that she has to offer. Councillors noted the success of the Allotments at Levens Hall as a community asset and how the site would be enhanced by the installation of additional water supply to individual plots. Cllr Mason has estimated that to do this job will cost somewhat in excess of £500 and it was **Agreed** to submit a bid to fund this work.
- ii. It was **Agreed** to consider a review of the Allotments and rents at the next meeting.
- iii. W&FC has issued an email address to which concerns and / or observations about waste collections can be directed. This is not a public facility, but Councillors are asked to note any problems which they or the Clerk can forward on for attention.
- iv. The next briefing update on the situation with the Brigsteer and Underbarrow Bridges is to be hosted by W&FC on-line on 22 October at 5.30. This will be followed on 23 October by a public drop-in event from 3.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. in the Brigsteer Village Hall.

c) Police: PCSO Park's apologies had been reported earlier. The most recent editions of the Focus Newsletter had been circulated. Operation Enhance to target anti-social behaviour continues.

65/24 Finance

- a) **Receipts:** Councillors noted that there had been no receipts for the period 01 September – 30 September 2024.
- b) **Payments Required:** Councillors noted and **Approved** the following payments:
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| i. M R Curry: Salary September 2024 - (PC: £342.30; Project: £240.24; Charity: £0.00; Mileage: £16.20; Expenses (stationery): £23.47) | £ 622.21 |
| ii. HMRC: PAYE/NI Months 4-6: | 404.31 |
| iii. Moore: Annual Report and Audit (AGAR): | 504.00 |
| iv. M R Richardson: Assistance with Audit: | 40.00 |
| v. Cllr. R Atfield: Reimbursement of expenses (Remembrance Day wreath): | 19.99 |
| vi. Copyright Agent: Nothing further has been heard from Copyright Agent to date and it was Agreed to request them to provide legitimacy verification should they communicate again. Cllr Rogerson confirmed that the website has been audited to ensure that it carried no potential copyright infringements. The Clerk is preparing a statement for use on the website. It was Agreed to liaise with the source(s) of the potential infringement. | |
- c) **Bank Reconciliation:** The Clerk submitted a bank reconciliation showing a bank statement balance of £22,552.25p as at 30 September. There were two unpresented cheques totalling £512.62 leaving a net balance of £22,034.63. This was accepted and signed by the Chairman. Ring-fenced funds remain at £2,100.00 (woodland management) and £2,142.06 (Christmas event).
- d) **Bank Mandate:** The Clerk confirmed that he had opened up an application to update the bank mandate.
- e) **Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR):** The Clerk reported that the External Auditor has issued its Report and Certificate for the 2023-24 financial year confirming that with a minor exception (noted below) the AGAR demonstrates that proper practices and relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have been met. The Report and Certificate are on the website along with all other documents relevant to the 2023-24 AGAR. Councillors noted the observation in the External Auditor's Opinion that there was an incorrect assertion in the 2023-24 AGAR relating to how the Notice of Public Rights for 2022-23 had been advertised. Councillors recognised that the original error had been inadvertent and that the mis-assertion in 2023-24 stemmed from ambiguity in the question.

66/24 Levens Community Project

A meeting of the Project Advisory Group (PAG) had been held on 01 October and Cllr. Mason reported as follows:

a) Project Updates:

- i. Plot 3 Church Road: This remains on the market and Councillors agreed the PAG recommendation to leave it on sale at £140,000.
- ii. Underhill – water connection: Councillors agreed the PAG recommendation to accept the revised water connection quote of £8,000 from United Utilities (subject to asking them if they would consider a discount for a community project).
- iii. Underhill - electricity supply: Tony Hills is securing the necessary wayleaves from the EA.
- iv. Village Hall – Electric and water connections are in hand – ENWL are due to return to Nelson square to reinstate the ground disturbed to lay ducts and cables.
- v. Sales of stone from site continue and the sale of timber has been agreed.
- vi. The Community Ownership Fund remains closed to applications for the time being.
- vii. Liaison with local Housing Associations to explore support options for delivering the affordable is progressing. A very positive meeting with South Lakes Housing had been held earlier in the day when they expressed enormous admiration for the achievements of the Project to date. Communication with them will continue.
- viii. An application for grant to the W&FC Affordable Housing Fund is being prepared.

b) Appointment of Contractors:

Following the high cost of tenders received in the first round of tendering, alternative contractor models were being pursued as part of the procurement process. Two contractors who had agreed to work together have been invited to put in tenders. So far, a tender has been received for the groundwork and initial structure. This had identified possible cost savings, and it was agreed that Paul Snape (the Civil Engineer previously used for the retaining walls on the site) should be asked to look at the ideas suggested. The tender for block and building work was awaited. It was **Agreed** to retain the 2 contractors from the initial tender exercise for the time being.

- c) **Bank Reconciliation and Financial Report:** The most recent bank reconciliations for both the current account and the deposit account had been presented to PAG as follows:
- Current Account: Funds in Hand at 23 September were £16,735.06 after taking into account the approved transfer of £50,000 to the deposit account.
 - Project Funds on Deposit: Funds in hand in the deposit account at 30 September were £1,443,115.70 which will increase to £1,493,115.70 following the transfer of £50,000 from the current account.
 - The Clerk has enquired about putting funds on short term deposit via [Business Money Market Accounts | Business Banking | HSBC](#). This is not proving as easy as originally thought but there is a huge benefit to doing this and he will continue to pursue.
 - It was noted that there may be a potential cost benefit by streamlining the VAT returns via the Annual Return Scheme, rather than quarterly returns.
- d) **To Approve Payments Required:** There were no pending payments requiring approval.

67/24 Planning Applications:

- a) **Schedule of Planning Applications:** Updates to the Planning Schedule on 07 October had been circulated and the following were noted:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Status
43.	SL/2022/0074	Land to NE Levens La	Footpath down Levens La. Work on confirming a plan will continue.	A request to extend the timeframe for the submission of detailed plans to 31 March has been submitted.
29.	2024/0232/FPA	Lakesway Holiday Home & Lodge Park	Erection of leisure and spa facility building and associated infrastructure	PC objection submitted. See note below.
The Clerk reported that he had submitted a request for confirmation that Condition 7 (passing places) from the previous application has been discharged. Also, a request for confirmation about whether this case is going to Committee.				
36.	7/2024/5329	Sizergh Castle LA8 8AE	Surfacing of existing unsurfaced track. No provision for consultation	REFUSED under NOI procedure 08/08/2024
37.	2024/1000/FPA	Two Acres, Force Lane LA8 8ED	COU from agricultural land to domestic curtilage and erection of garage and store	No Objection submitted: REFUSED 20/08/2024
40.	2024/1619/FPA	Newholme, Levens LA8 8NP	Front single storey extension and conservatory	After discussion, it was Resolved to submit No Objection

- b) **Other planning matters:** It was noted that the planning application for the village shop (previous decision of **No Objection**) was not on the Schedule and the Clerk undertook to clarify.

68/24 Parish Council Newsletter: The Chairman reported that the newsletter needed to be printed and ready for circulation by 23/24 October and various Councillors were asked to provide text to the Clerk for inclusion. Cllr. Holmes agreed to receive the newsletters from the printers and to assist with the insertion process.

69/24 Levens Charity:

- a) **Next meeting of the Trustees:** The Clerk reported that the next meeting of the Appointed Trustees will be held immediately before the next Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 12 November.

70/24 Parish Council Vacancies: Following the successful conclusion of the recent co-option process, Cllr. Burrow suggested that it might be helpful to both future candidates and Councillors to have a standardised information pack containing not only a job description and personal specification but also an application form with set questions. Newly co-opted Cllr. Forshaw agreed that this would be helpful for prospective candidates.

71/24 Parish Assets and Land:

- Maintenance work: Cllr. Holmes reported that Andy Brayshaw will undertake tidying-up work (hedges / verges etc) by the end of the month. Various locations that need attention were noted.
- Brigsteer Road site: James Senior is to complete the walling work but is away until the 20th of the month.
- Jubilee Orchard: It was agreed that the site will now be levelled and cleared of rank vegetation with a view to getting trees in by the end of the planting season.
- Reinstatement of land at Nelson Square: Reinstatement is currently underway but not yet finished. The work will be monitored to ensure a satisfactory result.

- e) Woodland Management: The Clerk reported that the Tree H&S survey has been completed and the Report is on its way.

72/24 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

- a) Levens Traffic Management: The following reports were noted:
 - i) Levens Lane footpath: previously reported under the Planning item.
 - ii) Traffic Management within the village: The Clerk was instructed to write to Helen Karaaslan to elicit the traffic management plan discussed several years ago.
 - iii) Road repairs and advance notice: The Clerk confirmed that he had written to Highways to request notification of the upcoming programme of road works, such as re-surfacing, within the Parish.
 - iv) Issues reported to HIAMS – the Clerk reported that he had submitted requests via HIAMS for attention to road markings and obscured road lighting. He made a request for clear locational information for other issues and for logging future concerns. What3Words and photographs were highlighted as important pieces of information.
 - v) Bridge Closures: Previously reported under Item 64/24(b)iv.
- b) Parish Council Communications and Social Media Policy: The Clerk reported that work to produce a policy was underway.
- c) Levens Greening Campaign: In the absence of Cllr. Battye there was no report given. It was **Agreed** that future reports on the Greening initiative should be limited to matters that required a Parish Council input.

73/24 Correspondence: Apart from the routine circulation of matters from CALC and other Agencies, and matters of correspondence that had been dealt with in the meeting, the Clerk reported that there were no other items to consider.

74/24 Future Agenda Items:

- a) Parish Emergency Plan
- b) Matters that might be advised prior to the next meeting;
- c) Otherwise, follow-up to the current Agenda items.

75/24 Date of the Next Meeting:

The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday 12 November 2024 in the Methodist Church, Levens.

The meeting closed at 9.55 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....