

Levens Parish Council

MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 14 July 2026 in Levens Methodist Church commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Please note that in these Minutes, references to Levens Parish Council and Westmorland and Furness Council may frequently be shortened to the PC or W&FC respectively.

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

In Attendance: M. R. Curry (Clerk). No members of the public were present.

19/26 Apologies for Absence: Written apologies had been received from Cllr. Willacy.

20/26 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chair be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 12 May 2026 as a true record.

21/26 Declarations of Interest: No declarations of interest were declared and the Clerk confirmed that no requests for dispensation had been submitted.

22/26 Public Participation: In the absence of public attendees, no matters were raised.

23/26 Governance Matters

- a) Vice-Chair:** It was **Agreed** to defer the appointment of a Vice-Chair to the September meeting
- b) Councillor Vacancy:** The Clerk confirmed that he had formally notified W&FC of the vacancy, thereby initiating the recruitment process. The vacancy will be advertised on the website, noticeboard and in the upcoming Newsletter.
- c) Councillor Representations:** Re-allocation of the following representatives were **Agreed**:
 - i) Appointed Trustees, Levens Charity: Cllr. Rogerson will join Cllrs Burrow and Atfield
 - ii) HMLR: Representation no longer required
 - iii) Allotments: Cllr. Burrow resigned from this role. Cllr. Holmes was appointed and further consideration will be given to the appointment of a second representative.
 - iv) Underhill, the Orchard and surrounding area: Roger Mason will continue to oversee work in this area as part of his offer to remain as Chair of the Project Advisory Group
 - v) Project Advisory Group: the Chair will join this Group as a PC representative.
- d) Parish Council Working Group:** It was **Agreed** that this will take place at 7.00 p.m. on Monday 27 July in the Methodist Church. The Clerk will arrange the room booking and suggest Terms of Reference for the Group.
- e) Assertion 10:**
 - i) Email accounts: These are generally working satisfactorily for most but some glitches are still evident. The Chair agreed to facilitate an email training session to take place on a date to be confirmed.
 - ii) New Parish website: Cllr Rogerson agreed to talk to Tom Hecht about the removal of bespoke PC pages from the Community website. It was agreed however that the new PC website will be signposted from the community site.

24/26 Reports:

- a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings not otherwise on this Agenda:**
 - i) Levens Village Hall: Cllr. Rogerson confirmed that he had attended the recent AGM of the Village Hall (VH) at which several Trustees had stood down and new ones appointed. The VH was pleased to announce that meetings / bookings were increasing and that a new online booking system operated by Hallmaster had been commissioned. The replacement of curtains had been deferred for the time being.
 - ii) Cllr Holmes reported that he had been a volunteer at the Heaves Farm Open Days which had been very successful.
 - iii) Cllr. Atfield had attended the 'Meet Miranda' (Miranda Cannon - new CEO of W&FC) which had been interesting.
- b) Westmorland & Furness Council (W&FC):** Cllr Battye reported on the following initiatives:
 - i) Miranda Cannon (CEO, W&FC) will be embarking on tours of the area over the coming weeks. The programme will be publicised when confirmed.
 - ii) Cllr. Battye will be touring the village with lead officers coordinating the new Local Plan in the next few weeks (date to be confirmed). It was **Agreed** that additional PC representation should be present when Cllr. Battye meets with W&FC officers and she will advise Cllr. Burrow on the

- arrangements. Cllr. Burrow expressed surprise that W&FC cannot find the original Parish Plan, nor indeed the upgrade circulated to them earlier in the year.
- iii) A colour flyer has been produced promoting the arrangements for green waste collections and is to be circulated. It was confirmed that all recyclable waste gets sorted.
 - iv) Cllr. Battye confirmed that W&FC has the power to acquire long-term vacant, deteriorating properties that negatively impact the locality.
 - v) W&FC continue their rolling programme of road repairs, but re-surfacing in the village is delayed pending the completion of UU works on the road near the old Heaves Hotel. In response to Cllr. Burrow, Cllr. Battye undertook to ask about the plans for resurfacing on Brigsteer Road, Beathwaite Close and Greengate.
 - vi) W&FC is modelling future budgets to mitigate potential service cuts driven by anticipated reductions in government funding.
- c) **Police:** The most recent editions of the Focus Newsletter had been circulated otherwise there were no matters of direct relevance to Levens.

25/26 Recent Meetings

- a) **Annual Parish Meeting (APM):** Councillors noted that the APM held on 19 May had been well attended by parishioners and representatives of local organisations. There were reports from Cllr. Roger Atfield in his final report as Chair, from Cllr. Roger Mason on the Levens Community Project, Cllr. Janet Battye on W&FC initiatives and the Clerk on finance and administration. Other than general questions on the progress of the Project there was no feedback requiring immediate attention. 12 Village organisations gave reports on their recent activities demonstrating the breadth of activity in Levens. The draft Minutes of the meeting are at <https://www.levens-pc.gov.uk/?Meetings>.
- b) **Informal Village Tour:** The following outcomes from the informal village tour held on 16 June were noted:
- i) Highways matters: Parking concerns were raised regarding Brigsteer Road and pavement parking in the Beathwaite Close area. Councillors noted that while on-street parking causes obstructions, it also serves to naturally slow down passing traffic. It was **Agreed** to contact W&FC Highways for advice.
 - ii) Roadside signs require cleaning, and roadside drains on Lowgate (by the Methodist Church) are completely blocked. It was **Agreed** to report these maintenance issues and the parking concerns at Gilpin Bridge to W&FC Highways for their attention.
 - iii) The dumping of garden waste on PC land had been noted. This amounts to fly-tipping and is detrimental to ground conditions. It was **Agreed** to highlight this in the forthcoming Parish Newsletter in the first instance.
 - iv) The 30-m.p.h. sign on Hutton Lane is obscured, and it was agreed that roadside vegetation here and hedges in other locations needs cutting back. Following a procurement exercise in the previous year it was **Agreed** that Cllr. Holmes should approach James Burrow to attend to this work at the end of July.
 - v) On Underhill, several holes in PV Dobson's wall boundary were noted and considered to be potentially dangerous. It was **Agreed** to drop them a note to draw their attention to this.
 - vi) At the Hare and Hounds, it had been agreed to leave the tidying up of Plot 3 to the end of July. Cllr. Willacy had offered to regrade the approach platform to the noticeboard.
 - vii) The ex-telephone box on The Green is the subject of a draft agreement between the Parish Council and British Telecommunications plc. for the transfer of ownership to the PC for use as a defibrillator cabinet. The Clerk pointed out that it contains a number of clauses that require exploration, particularly in respect of electrical specifications. It was **Agreed** that the Clerk should take advice from CALC as to other Parish Councils that had entered a similar agreement and to liaise with them. Cllr. Battye will source examples of boxes that have been re-purposed.
 - viii) The Parish Council had received a request for the purchase of land at Cotes. The Clerk reported that he had contacted Armitstead Barnett to provide a quote for a valuation as a first step.

26/26 Finance

- a) **Receipts 01 May – 30 June 2026:** The Clerk was unable to report on receipts for the period as bank statements had not been received via the post. Cllr. Atfield had accessed electronic statements (not available to the Clerk) and a brief review suggested that there were no matters of exception to report. The Clerk will prepare and circulate a formal report on the basis the information received.
- b) **Payments Made Between Meetings:** The following payments (approved by email) were **Ratified:**
- i) A2A Advertising - Assertion 10 costs: £ 840.00
(One objection to this payment was noted)
 - ii) Levens Playing Fields - Grant awarded: £ 1,600.00

iii) Levens Methodist Church - Grant for hosting the Post Office:	£ 700.00
iv) M R Curry - Salary / expenses, May:	£ 651.34
v) Mitchinsons Accountants - Admin Fee, Pensions Regulator:	£ 72.00
vi) Cllr. D. Rogerson – Refund expenses - renewal Website Domain Registration:	£ 4.06
vii) M. Richardson – Audit support 2025-26 AGAR:	£ 280.00

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

i) M R Curry - Salary / expenses, June 2026: (PC: £426.27; LCP: £138.56; Charity: £27.95; Mileage: £26.40; Expenses: £14.56) Total:	£ 633.74
ii) HMRC – PAYE/NIC Quarter 1 2026-27:	£ 669.56
iii) Levens Village Hall - Room Hire Annual Parish Meeting:	£ 28.00
iv) Other payments required since publication of this Agenda: None was required	

d) Finance Report: To receive the Bank Reconciliation and a note on Ring-fenced Funds at 30 June 2026: In the absence of bank statements, no report was possible. One would be prepared when bank statements were available.

e) Bank Mandate and Digital Banking: The Chair asked Cllr. Atfield to try to resolve this.

f) Annual Governance & Accounting Report 2025-26 (AGAR): The Clerk reported that all papers had been completed, published and submitted to the External Auditor within the required timescale.

27/26 Levens Community Project:

a) Levens Project Advisory Group: The July meeting had been cancelled, but progress continues with ACS with regard to building regulations and final costings.

b) To Approve payments recommended by PAG: No payments were required.

28/26 Planning Applications:

a) Schedule of Planning Applications: Updates to the Planning Schedule on 13 July 2026 had been circulated and noted. Current unresolved matters are:

PC Ref	Application No.	Location	Proposal	Status
43	SL/2022/0074	Levens Lane	Footpath	Extension agreed to 31/12/2026
6	2025/1770/FPA	Heaves Farm, Levens	Extension to slurry lagoon	Remains under consideration. No objection submitted.
13	2026/0598/HOU	11 The Green, Levens	Single storey extension etc	Remains under consideration. No objection submitted
2	2026/0414/FPA	Moss Lea, Levens	Extension of boarding kennels	Remains under consideration. No objection submitted
5	2026/0400/HOU	55 Greengate, Levens	Various extensions	Considered and Agreed No Objection

b) Other planning matters:

i) **W&FC Local Plan:** On 30 June 2026, W&FC issued formal notice of its intention to commence preparation of a new Local Plan. It launched a Scoping Consultation running from 1 July to 11 August 2026 to gather views on key priorities and community involvement. Consultation guidance is available on the W&FC website, and information had been posted to the Levens Parish Council website and local noticeboard. Cllr. Rogerson expressed disappointment that the online process is not straightforward to use and Cllr. Battye will feed back that observation. Councillors emphasised the importance of publicising the process locally to actively encourage widespread parishioner engagement. To support the process, paper copies of the response form will be procured and made available at key village locations. Whilst not supporting or opposing development in principle, it was **Agreed** that the Parish Council will submit a formal response to the consultation along the lines of previous submissions relating to the capacity of village infrastructure to cope with large new developments. The arrangement for a PC representative to meet with planning officers (see 24/26(b)(ii) above) was confirmed.

ii) **Levens Parish Council Parish Plan:** Work to update this had been completed and discussion about its status needs to be had with W&FC.

29/26 Parish Council Communications

a) Summer Newsletter: Arrangements for the publication and distribution of the Summer Newsletter were confirmed and a number of items for inclusion were agreed.

b) Communications Strategy: Cllr. Forshaw outlined his proposals for increasing public engagement with the work of the Parish Council. It was Agreed to discuss this in more detail as part of the Working Group meeting on Monday 27 July.

30/26 Proposed Bus Shelter A590: There was discussion on this proposal, and a number of concerns were expressed about the direct benefits to the Parish and the liabilities associated with ownership and maintenance. It was concluded that the PC was not in a position to decide on this matter at this stage. It was **Agreed** that the Chair would contact the Chair of Witherslack PC to learn from their experiences of a similar scheme. Cllr. Battye will set up a meeting with W&FC, the National Trust and the Parish Council to explore this further.

31/26 Levens Charity: The Clerk reported that he had reviewed fund values at the end of the 2025-26 financial year and circulated the outcome to the Appointed Trustees. The overall fund values showed a decrease in value compared with 31 March 2025; however, he had reviewed the investments again at the end of June 2026 when the accumulated fund value had recovered and stood at £172,774.29p. The Appointed Trustees will meet in October to review the performance in 2025-26 and take note of values at the 2026-27 half-year.

32/26 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda

a) Levens Traffic Management: The following reports were noted:

- i. **Levens Lane footpath:** Progress is awaiting priority decisions during the next phase of the Capital Investment Programme. Cllr. Battye will try to get feedback from the Feasibility Studies.
- ii. **Traffic Management within the village:** The agreed white lining is temporarily on hold pending the scheduled road re-surfacing work.
- iii. **20-m.p.h. Limit:** The signage is to be installed shortly following the engagement of contractors.

b) Parish Assets and Land

- i. **Maintenance Work Required:** Cllr. Holmes reported that Andy Brayshaw has been instructed to cut the verges as identified on the recent informal tour of the village and the Brigsteer Road picnic site.
- c) Allotments and Land Rents:** The Clerk had circulated a Schedule of current rents for carpark sites, Allotments and land. It was **Agreed** to review these in detail at the September meeting.
- d) Dog-Fouling:** This remains of concern and attention was brought to correspondence on the subject from a local resident. A further note will be included in the upcoming Newsletter.
- e) Levens Emergency Action Plan (LEAP):** Cllr. Forshaw reported that development of the Plan continues. Resuscitation training for local volunteers is to take place on 15, 22 and 29 September.

33/26 Correspondence Received: The Clerk had circulated communications from CALC, W&FC and regional agencies as appropriate. Other than dealt with in the meeting, no communications had been received from parishioners or other individuals.

34/25 Future Agenda Items: To follow up on existing matters, items identified for further discussion at this meeting and any new matters requiring attention.

35/25 Date of the Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Tuesday 08 September 2026 in the Methodist Church, Levens.

The meeting closed at 10.20 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....