

Levens Parish Council

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 12 May 2026 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 three members of the public.

Before the meeting commenced and on behalf of the Parish Council, Cllr. Atfield extended deepest sympathy to Mike Dyer and family on the sad loss of Jenny Berge and acknowledged her work on the Project Advisory Group with gratitude.

01/26 Chair of the Parish Council 2026-27: Cllr. Atfield stated that he was not standing for re-election. Cllr. David Forshaw was proposed by Cllr. Burrow, seconded by Cllr. Holmes. Cllr. Roger Mason was proposed by Cllr. Rogerson and seconded by Cllr. Battye. After an inconclusive vote (4 each) Cllr. Mason stood aside following which Cllr. Forshaw was elected unanimously and signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office. On taking the Chair, Cllr. Forshaw thanked Cllr. Atfield for all his work as Chair over the past 14 years.

02/26 Apologies for Absence: All Councillors were in attendance, and no other apologies had been received.

03/26 Vice-Chair 2026-27: Cllr. Mason was proposed as Vice-Chair of the Parish Council by Cllr. Atfield and seconded by Cllr. Burrow. There being no other nominations, Cllr. Mason was elected unanimously and signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

04/26 Minutes: It was **Resolved** that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 14 April 2026 as a true record.

05/26 Declarations of Interest: No Declarations of Interest were submitted.

06/26 Appointment of Representatives:

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

Position	Representative(s)
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
q) Safeguarding Officer (new post)	Cllr. Forshaw
r) Newsletter Coordination: Cllr Atfield agreed to act as Parish Council representative in relation to publication dates for the Parish Newsletter.	

07/26 Meeting Dates 2026-27: The following meeting dates were **Agreed**:

2026: 09 June (informal meeting – village tour); 14 July; 08 September; 13 October; 10 November

2027: 12 January; 09 February; 09 March; 13 April; 11 May.

08/26 Public Participation:

a) Cllr. Rogerson offered to assist a parishioner with email access on the village website.

b) In response to further questions:

i) Cllr. Mason said that he anticipated that the new village hall will be under construction within the year and that work was currently focused on refining plans and the tendering process.

- ii) Once the new community orchard is complete wildflower seed and domestic bulbs will be introduced.
- iii) It was **Agreed** that Mr K. Stott should dispose of the remnant wood on the village hall site.

09/26 Reports:

a) Reports from Councillors attending meetings:

- i. Cllr. Battye had attended an online CALC session on 30 April on integrated transport to explore how local transport works across Westmorland & Furness, including the role of commercial bus services, supported routes and community transport. This is part of a developing initiative to improve rural transport solutions.

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

- i. W&FC is to issue a flier to households in the coming week explaining how the new green waste arrangements are to work.
- ii. The second 'call for sites' process under the developing Local Plan has been completed and assessment is expected to be finalised by the Autumn. Some dismay was expressed about a change in planning regulations to take effect in September giving planning officers greater flexibility to make delegated decisions linked to a presumption in favour of development and the ambition to meet new housing targets. It is anticipated that the new Plan will be completed in approximately 30 months.
- iii. The W&FC Dog Warden is visiting Levens regularly and has noted areas of particular concern. There is an option to install cameras in the worst places. Cllr. Battye will put him in touch with Cllr. Holmes in relation to persistent offenders and locations.
- iv. A programme of road repair is in place and Levens Lane is targeted. This will involve addressing potholes, followed by surface dressing and finally road markings including white lining.
- v. Evidence of regular flaunting of the weight restrictions on the Brigsteer and Underbarrow road bridges is of real concern and has led to the introduction of physical barriers to reduce the carriageway width to 6' 6" in either direction. Government funding for permanent repair / replacement has been applied for, but this is a long-term solution.
- vi. The Old Carpet Shop does not fall within the scope of the High Street Rental Auctions Scheme but is on the empty properties list which may lead to some resolution.

10/26 Finance

a) Receipts: Receipts for the period 01 April – 30 April 2026 were:

BW & GM Bland – car park rent:	£	20.00
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b) Payments Required: The following payments were **Approved**:

i) M R Curry - Salary April 2026: (PC: £632.45; LCP: £77.96; Charity: £31.45 Mileage: £16.20; Expenses: £7.20) Total:	£	765.26
ii) Mitchinsons Accountants – Payroll admin fee 2025-26:	£	288.00
iii) Armstrong Watson - VAT Admin Fee Q4 2025-26:	£	150.00
iv) G D Airey – Internal Audit Fee:	£	100.00
Payment of the following grants for 2025-26 were Approved :		
v) Levens Playing Fields: (subject to confirmation of request):	£	1,600.00
vi) Levens Methodist Church:	£	700.00

c) Bank Reconciliation and Ring-fenced Funds: The bank reconciliation for 01 - 30 April 2026 was received and noted. The net balance after unrepresented cheques was £23,173.61. The Chair was authorised to sign the bank statement. Councillors noted and approved a statement of restricted and earmarked reserves showing a total of £9,174.04 in ring-fenced funds.

d) Bank Mandate: This remains work in progress.

e) Annual Governance & Accounting Report 2025-26 (AGAR):

- i) **Annual Internal Audit Report 2025-26:** The Clerk presented the Internal Auditor's Report for 2025-26, which noted a high standard of record keeping and confirmed a true and accurate account of the Council's finance and governance records. The Internal Audit Report was **Approved**.
- ii) **The Annual Governance Statement 2025-26** (AGAR Section 1): The Clerk presented the Annual Governance Statement for 2025-26 which recorded the satisfactory discharge of governance requirements as confirmed by the Internal Audit Report. Councillors **Approved** the Statement, which was signed by the Clerk and Chair.
- iii) **The Accounting Statement 2025-26** (AGAR Section 2): The Clerk presented the Accounting Statement for 2025-26 which he had signed and which was **Approved** by Councillors and signed by the Chair.

- iv) **Notice of the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights:** Councillors received and **Approved** the Notice for the Period of the Exercise of Public Rights, which will run from 03 June to 14 July 2026. The Notice will be published on the website and the notice board.

f) Other Governance Matters

- i) Asset Register: The Asset Register for 2026-27 was **Approved**.
- ii) Policy Documents: The Clerk submitted proposals for a review of the content, synchronicity of approval dates and formatting of all Policy documents and this work was **Approved**.
- iii) Assertion 10: The Clerk confirmed that all requirements for Assertion 10 had been met including the distribution of new email addresses and a new website (www.levens-pc.gov.uk). Formal launch of the new email addresses will be notified in the coming days. Councillors confirmed their support for the Community Website and Cllr. Rogerson will act as link with this facility.
- iv) Parish Council Working Group to discuss Councillor roles: This matter was deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

11/26 Levens Community Project

- a) **Levens Project Advisory Group:** Cllr. Mason gave a verbal report from the PAG meeting held on 05/05/2026 including:

- i) Sale of Plot 3, Church Hill: A quote for the undergrounding of the electricity wire is being procured. This should result in a more attractive site for sale
- ii) Underhill: Three quotes for the laying of the foundation slab had been received and were considered. Tenders (all ex-VAT) were £120,500.00; £89,057.80 and £65,327.00. It was **Agreed** to award the contract to J. Thacker & Sons Ltd at the quoted price of £65,327.00 + VAT. Building Regulations approval is required before work can commence.
- iii) New Village Hall: Michael Renwick of ACS will be asked to attend the next PAG meeting on 02 June to update on progress with revised costings.
- iv) Project Management and Finance Review: Cllr. Mason confirmed that he had spoken with Tony Hills and agreed in principle that ACS should now take the primary lead in progressing the Project but that the Project wished TH to be retained for advice and support. This is particularly the case in relation to Building Regulations which were submitted in TH's name. This proposal was **Approved** and discussions with ACS will continue. Current funds-in-hand confirmed on a bank reconciliation are:
Current Account: £ 12,905.02
Deposit Account: £1,511,260.36

- b) The following payment recommended by PAG was **Approved**:

WaterPlus - Standing Charges Water Supply, Underhill: £ 107.44

12/26 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	Extended to 31 December 2026.
1.	2026/0639/HOU	44, Greengate, LA8 8NF	Extension of living space into adjacent store + solar panels	No Objection
2.	2026/0414/FPA	Moss Lea, Levens LA8 EJ	Ext of boarding kennels – single storey detached building 10 units	No Objection
3.	2026/0572/HOU	2, Whitbarrow Grove LA8 8LT	Wall around perimeter of front garden	No Objection
4.	2026/0790/HOU	Box Tree Barn LA8 8NZ	First storey extension & balcony	No Objection

- b) **Other Planning Matters:**

- i) The Old Carpet Shop – discussed at 09/26(b)(vi) above.
- ii) The Parish Plan: Cllr. Burow confirmed that the update to the Parish Plan had been submitted to Westmorland and Furness Council and that discussions were underway to confirm that it was being appended to the original Plan.

13/26 The Annual Parish Meeting (APM): It was confirmed that the APM had been publicised both by way of formal notice, posters, on the website and on social media. It is to commence at 7.30 p.m. in the Village Hall and will follow the established format.

14/26 Levens Charity: The Clerk will convene a meeting of the Appointed Trustees to consider the end of year report for 2025-26.

15/26 Open Actions Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda: The following reports were noted:

- a) Levens Traffic Management:
 - i. Levens Lane footpath: Cllr. Battye confirmed that the scheme is in the Capital Programme.
 - ii. Traffic Management within the village: The white lining at the Playing Fields will take place after resurfacing work (mid-year). A growing problem is with parked cars along Brigsteer Road towards Whitegates where parked cars are narrowing the carriageway and on occasion have blocked access to driveways. It was noted that this is a road safety issue and that incidents should be reported on 101. The Clerk will alert the police to this growing problem.
 - iii. 20-m.p.h. Initiative: Cllr. Battye will seek confirmation of when work is to be finalised.
- b) Parish Assets and Land
 - i) Brigsteer Road Site: This will be visited on the Village Tour
 - ii) Coronation Orchard: Further work on the roadside boundary wall and entrance is in hand via Cllr. Mason. The Clerk reported that the Wayleave Agreement had been finalised so work can commence to put the ducting to the affordable houses through the site.
 - iii) Allotments and land rents: Invoicing is in hand for these and other land holdings.
 - iv) Cllr. Holmes drew attention to fly-tipping on Parish land and this will be viewed during the village tour on 09 June.
- c) Defibrillator: Cllr Burrow reported that the consultation on the use of the old phone box had completed on 29 April and that she was now awaiting the contract to enable its use to house the new defibrillator. The old BT decals can now be removed from the door and new community defibrillator designs put in their place. These may cost a small amount but were agreed in principle.
- d) Parish Emergency Plan: Cllr. Forshaw reported that arrangements for the training of volunteers in heart start and resuscitation were now in hand and will take place over coming months. He took note of a suggestion from the floor about confirming arrangements for air ambulance services including landing sites and flares and will build updates into the Plan.

16/26 Correspondence: In addition to the routine circulation of matters from CALC and other Agencies, there were no other items of correspondence reported.

17/26 Future Agenda Items:

- a) In addition to follow-up on current items, items for the July Agenda will include:
 - i. Parish Council Communications

18/26 Date of the Next Meeting:

The next formal meeting of the Parish Council will take place on 14 July at 7.30 p.m. in the Methodist Church. The informal annual village tour will take place on 09 June.

The meeting closed at 9.49 p.m.

Signed (Chairman) Date.....