



ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2014-2015 (Cllr. Peter Godfrey)

Introduction

When I was growing up in the suburbs of Liverpool, Cheshire was a sort of Promised Land that other people lived in and I felt lucky to be able to visit occasionally. I would never have predicted then that I would be standing here tonight addressing you as Chairman of Goostrey Parish Council having lived in Cheshire for the last 46 years. It has been an honour and privilege for me to give something back to the community I love by serving the residents of Goostrey as a Parish Councillor and latterly by Chairing the Parish Council. I would like to thank the residents for voting me onto the Council and the Councillors for electing me as your Chairman for the last year. My personal highlight was representing the community at the annual Remembrance Day Service at St Luke's church especially as it was the 100th anniversary of the start of the Great War. The most satisfying event of the year was finally reaching the agreement with the Scouts which has resolved the long-standing problem of how to provide a Youth Facility for the young people of the village (more on this later!). I would like to thank all my fellow Councillors for their help, support and encouragement throughout the year and for making my job as Chairman easy. I am sure they would all like to join with me in thanking The Parish Clerk, Sharon Jones, for the excellent support she has given to the Councillors and the Council over the two years she has been with us.

This year marks the end of the 4 year term of the present Parish Council and so my review will cover the term not just the previous year. I would like to thank the other people who have chaired the PC during this term and I would also like to thank the Councillors who have announced they will be retiring at the end of this term for their contribution to the community - Martin Leake (a past Chairman and an astonishing 22 Yrs service), Shirley Collins (9 yrs) and Vick Fagan (5 yrs). Special mention should also be made of Gordon Salmon who retired during the term, having completed 19 years of continuous service including being Chairman 3 times, and the Chair of many of its Cttees and Denise Draper our previous Clerk who retired after some 7 years service. I think it would be appropriate for us to give them all a round of applause for their contributions to our community.

Achievements

Many organisations, societies and events make Goostrey the great place it is to live in – our Community Primary School, our two Churches, Rose Day, Goosfest, VHPFF, the uniformed Youth organisations, Speedwatch, Neighbourhood Watch and numerous other organisations, clubs and societies. The Parish Council consists of 10 Councillors and our Parish Clerk. We cannot, and do not want to, do everything ourselves – we are at our most effective when we work in partnership with the other community organisations in the village. Sometimes the Parish Council provides financial support to other community organisations to help them start up or to overcome a particular problem or to achieve a specific objective. In other cases, the organisations are entirely self sufficient and work independently from the Parish Council but may use the Village Hall or publicise themselves on the Goostrey Village Website. The Parish Council should celebrate anything which improves the village whether or not we have been directly involved.

When this Parish Council took over, it inherited a Parish Plan developed in 2004, which had been largely implemented. However, two actions remained uncompleted. These were;

- Improvement of the Youth Centre
- Establish a Friends of Goostrey Station Group

The major achievement of the Parish Council in the last year has been the agreement reached with the 1st Goostrey Scouts for them to build a new Scout Hut and Youth Facility on the site of the Old Youth Centre in return for the community gifting them the land and paying for the demolition of the redundant building. The Parish Council believes that this partnership with the Scouts represents the

best chance of delivering a Youth Facility for the young people in the village and hence completing the outstanding action from the Parish Plan. We are grateful to the Scouts for proposing this solution and I am pleased to announce that after extensive negotiations about the terms, the transfer of part of the old Youth Centre site to the Scouts took place at the end of March. A spin-off benefit of this plan will be the removal of an eyesore which has disfigured the village for many years since the old Youth Centre fell into disuse. I am grateful to Cllr McCubbin who has led the Council's Youth Facilities Working Party. The Friends of Goostrey Station was set up in 2012 and has started to deliver benefits to rail passengers and other residents. In fact, Goostrey Station picked up the Most Improved Station award at the 2014 Cheshire Best Kept Stations Awards evening earlier this year. So our congratulations are due to The Friends of Goostrey Station and their partners, Goostrey Community Primary School, whose regular exhibitions of Art Work contributed to the winning of the Award.

The Goostrey Archive Group was also set up in 2012. It has established a Goostrey Archive at The Blackden Trust which can be visited by appointment. The success of the Archive depends on residents contributing any documents, objects and memories they have of Goostrey's past.

Based on these successes, we are launching another community Group tonight and will be inviting interested residents to sign up to become Friends of Booth Bed Lane Pay Area.

Another achievement this year has been the substantial completion of a Goostrey Community Resilience Plan. The purpose of this is to enable the Goostrey community and individuals to harness local resources and expertise to help themselves in an emergency, affecting all or part of Goostrey, in a way that complements the response of the emergency services, bearing in mind that during a major, wide-area emergency, it could be some time before those services are able to provide assistance. By planning in advance the Parish Council may provide key assistance by co-ordinating local response activities. We expect to be able to publish the final document on the Goostrey Village website in April. I am grateful to Cllr Rathbone for producing this plan.

The Parish Council has effected a number of improvements to the village over the last 4 years – landscaping the bank near Shearbrook steps, replacement of the Christmas lights on the Bogbean, refurbishing benches throughout the village, obtaining a grant for restoring the War Memorial (though the work is yet to be done). It has continued to maintain the Burial Ground. In a couple of weeks', we will be unveiling a stone to mark the 'Churchill Oak' which was planted on the Bogbean 50 years ago to commemorate the passing of Sir Winston Churchill. The Parish Council has organised the annual Senior Citizens' lunch each year, started showing films in the Village Hall and has handed over the Christmas Lights switch-on to the 1st Goostrey Scouts (another example of Partnership!). The Village Hall continues to be in big demand and a number of improvements have been made over the last 4 years - new curtains, new chairs and a floor cleaner have been bought, the Car Park has been resurfaced and remarked, an on-line booking system introduced, a dedicated cleaner hired and the the lighting system improved.

We have had some success in making our priorities known to Cheshire East Highways but this is an area in which further improvements must be sought by the next Council. I have also been disappointed that despite making our requirements clear to the Connecting Cheshire project, we still have no firm indication of whether or when the remaining 60 or so households in the Parish will be able to obtain faster broadband.

Local Plan

What I have described to you so far tonight would have represented a full programme for any Parish Council. However, I have yet to mention the biggest issue the Parish Council has had to face throughout this term - proposed housing development in and around Goostrey. It started with the publication of the draft Cheshire East Local Plan designating Goostrey as a Local Service Centre with the implication that it could support a significant amount of new housing. Despite massive opposition from Goostrey residents, the Submission Version of the Local Plan retained Goostrey's status as a Local Service Centre although it added the sentence "In the case of Goostrey which adjoins Holmes Chapel, a larger Local

Service Centre, it is anticipated that development needs will largely be provided for in Holmes Chapel.”. Unfortunately, matters have deteriorated since then with the Local Plan having to be revised and Cheshire East being forced to admit that it does not have a 5-year housing land supply opening the door to a flood of proposals for new housing in Goostrey and elsewhere.

The Parish Council has opposed proposals for significant housing developments north of New Platt Lane, east of Hermitage Lane, south of Main Road and north of Main Road. We were bitterly disappointed that our representations and those of the Residents’ Action Group were unsuccessful in preventing the approval of 38 houses north of New Platt Lane. We were pleased that we have been successful so far in opposing applications for east of Hermitage Lane and south of Main Road. We await with concern the decision next month on the largest proposed development north of Main Road.

I came to Goostrey because I wanted to live in a rural village and I’m sure most of you did the same. I assume that those people lucky enough to be born in Goostrey, who have stayed here, feel the same way. Residents’ opinions vary about how many houses could be built in the village without destroying its rural character but what is clear is that the overwhelming majority of Goostrey residents wish the village to retain that rural character. The community needs to work with the Parish Council to resist all developments which threaten that character.

Neighbourhood Plan

Faced with the massive uncertainties in the planning process, the Parish Council has set up a Committee to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Goostrey. It is expected that this will help us in three areas;

- It will provide a locally driven development plan for Goostrey which will become legally enforceable through the Local Plan
- It will enable the community to maintain its rural character by controlling the nature and type of development in the Parish by means of a Neighbourhood Design Statement
- It will identify the village’s priorities for the next few years in effect superseding the current Village Plan

The Goostrey Neighbourhood Area Application has been submitted and is currently in its six week consultation phase. This ended on 5th April after which Cheshire East Council has six weeks to make a decision on whether to designate the Neighbourhood Area. If the Neighbourhood Area is designated, work on the Neighbourhood Plan can commence and wider community involvement will be sought. The completion of the Neighbourhood Plan will be a major priority for the next Parish Council.

Parish Council Elections

This Parish Council was elected and that democratic legitimacy has empowered us to take decisions on your behalf. I know some people have not agreed with some of the decisions we have taken and may have felt they were detrimental to their interests, I hope that even those people will accept that there has been nothing personal about what we have decided and that we have as a Council been consistently attempting to act in the interests of the village as a whole. We now know that there is not going to be an election for the next Parish Council as in addition to the six Councillors who were willing to stand again only two other people have been nominated. The new Council will therefore co-opt a further two people onto the Council to bring it up to full strength.

Finally I would like to thank my wife Sylvia for putting up with the demands which the Council has made on my time and for supporting me through some of the more challenging times of my Chairmanship.

