



# Goostrey Parish Council

*The Village Hall  
Goostrey  
Cheshire  
CW4 8PE  
01477 535825*

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**Held on Thursday 27th APRIL 2023 at 7.30pm in the Main Hall, Village Hall**

Present: Cllrs O'Donoghue (IOD) (Chairman), Morgan (PM) (Vice Chairman), Rathbone (TR) Beckham (NB), Freeman (AF), Ross (CR), Craggs (DC)

In attendance: Cllr. A Kolker (AK) - Cheshire East Council (CEC) Ward Councillor, Emma Bambrook - Clerk to the Council, 17 Members of the Public.

1. **Welcome & Introduction:** The Chairman welcomed residents and Cllr Andrew Kolker, Cheshire East Ward Councillor, to the meeting and provided an introduction and overview of the evening.
2. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Morris and Sulej.
3. **Minutes:** To approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Annual Parish Meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022 were accepted as true record of the meeting.

4. **Chairman's Report 2022-2023** - Cllr Ian O'Donoghue, Chairman of the Parish Council, delivered his report for 2022/23.

IOD provided an overview of the duties and responsibilities of Parish Councillors and talked about council members, thanking them for their hard work in the community during their term in office. He also thanked Cllrs. Ross and Sulej, who are not standing for re-election, for their commitment and service.

An introduction to the council employees and their responsibilities was also made and the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer was thanked for her work over the past year. IOD spoke about the Village Hall Supervisors who are responsible for managing the Village Hall and all its bookings, noting that they take great pride in the work that they do and approach everything in a professional manner. They were congratulated for a job exceptionally well done this year.

IOD explained how the council's committees manage the council's income (the precept and the income from the hire of the Village Hall) for the benefit of the community. The Chairman encouraged members of the public to attend any of the full council or committee meetings and provided an overview of the work of the council's committees as follows:

**Finance:** The committee review budgets and costs in a timely manner to help the council meet their goals and stay within budget.

**Amenities:** This committee identifies community assets, services or events to improve the quality of life in the village for residents. The committee manages budgets for cutting the grass in the graveyard and in other grassed areas around the village, planters, planting and maintaining village assets. The Seniors' Christmas Lunch is organised and subsidised by the committee's budget and the committee acts as liaison for the Archive Group, Goostrey Footpaths and the Tree Warden. This year the environmental hedging on Shearbrook Bank has been planted and improvements

made to the village entrance at the junction of Main Road and Boothbed Lane. Improvements to the Christmas lighting on the Bogbean have been started, with free services secured from Dutton's Contractors as a community engagement project; Richard Dutton was thanked for this. The savings from this has allowed the second stage to start at least a year early and the committee is currently obtaining quotes from lighting companies to supply and install Goostrey's Christmas lights for this year. This is a busy committee and Cllr. Rathbone, the committee chairman, works extremely hard taking care of Goostrey and its green spaces, Cllr. Rathbone was thanked for this.

**Planning:** The committee comments on all planning applications in the parish and these comments are directed by policies including the Neighbourhood Plan. When required, the committee will also provide input to appeals. The committee seek to protect the size as well as the village aesthetics.

**Staff:** This committee meets as required to manage any staff matters.

**Village Hall Management Committee:** This committee is a partnership with the school and the Village Hall Playing Fields Foundation (VHPFF) who manage, maintain and improve the facility. An increase in hire charges was a difficult but necessary decision to help cover costs in order to secure the Village Hall for the use of the community in the future.

Grants and donations were also provided to local organisations as follows:

- VHPFF – Grant as a contribution to the building of the new Bowling Pavilion.
- Goostrey Community Shed – Grant as a contribution towards new equipment.
- Goostrey Open Gardens – Grant to help support the first event which raised over £10,000 for charity.

Donations were made to two families in the village supporting Ukrainians fleeing the war and a donation was also given to the British Red Cross Ukrainian Appeal.

Local events are also supported as follows:

- Provision of a mobile toilet unit for Rose Day.
- Funding to support the running of the Scouts' Christmas Lights Switch On event.
- Funding to assist St. Luke's with their Christmas lighting.

This year, in partnership with the churches in Goostrey, the council ran a Warm Welcome initiative during the winter with many volunteers giving up their time to help run it. Although not well attended, it was still there for the unknown number of people who may have needed it and it was a delight to see the various organisations from the village come together to help those who may have been in need.

Councillors also have liaison roles with external organisations such as Rudheath Quarry, the police, speed watch, the VHPFF, Highways, Manchester Airport and Friends of Goostrey Station. These roles help the council to remain apprised of other organisations' activities and build working relationships in the interests of the community. Continued pressure from the council on CEC Highways, ensured new drainage was installed on Main Road to decrease flooding and subsequent potholes on Shearbrook Bank. Cllr. Morgan is part of the Boothbed Lane Play Area Working Group which is working hard to establish a volunteer base to push this community project towards completion.

IOD encouraged members of the public to report issues, such as potholes which fall under the remit of CEC, using the reporting system on the CEC website.

The reduction in the 319 bus service in Goostrey seems to be as a result of the bus company closing depots. This has, however, coincided with the planned reduction in the subsidy provided by CEC. The Parish Council have only just been made aware of this and were not consulted but are determined to try to exert pressure on CEC to find a replacement provider.

The possible loss of the Post Office service in the village is, at this stage, a matter for The Post Office to relocate the outreach facility. The Parish Council will do all it can to assist in retaining this service in Goostrey but it is still commercial matter.

The chairman again encouraged members of the public to attend meetings and approach the council via formal channels rather than commenting on social media. IOD also advised that there are three vacancies on the council and anyone interested in being co-opted to contact any of the councillors or the Clerk for further information.

5. **Cllr. Andrew Kolker, Cheshire East Council & Services:** Cllr. Kolker opened by paying tribute to Cllr. Les Gilbert, Cheshire East Ward Councillor, who passed away on 18<sup>th</sup> April after a short illness. Cllr. Kolker paid tribute to his many excellent qualities as a councillor and colleague who will be sadly missed.

Cllr. Kolker provided some information on the history of Cheshire East Council as well as some facts and figures. The services provided by the authority include planning, highways, libraries, schools, school transport, open spaces, sports pitches, waste collection, licensing, housing, footpaths, town centre vitality, democratic services and elections, however, there are over 500 services which they provide.

There is a budget of £353,000,000 to provide these services, excluding dedicated school grants which are provided by central government. Approximately three quarters of this is provided by the taxpayer and most of the remainder from business rates. Business rates are collected by CEC on behalf of the government who then provide about 40p in the £1 back to CEC. Other councils receive more where there are specific needs. A small amount of funding is provided by specific grants such as grants to repair potholes or to make leisure centres more carbon neutral. Social Care accounts for two thirds of the budget but the whole budget could be spent easily in this area.

AK provided some statistics about Goostrey and compared them to other areas in Cheshire East. In brief, Goostrey is an affluent area with a healthy and well-educated population. These statistics exist for all areas and are important because they dictate where the greatest need is and where the money is spent.

AK then focussed on specific areas. Highways has a revenue budget of £11,000,000 and to maintain the roads at current levels they would need £28,000,000 so they are managing a declining resource. AK encouraged people to report road defects on the website or the Fix My Street App so that the defect can be assessed and triaged. If problems aren't reported, Highways won't necessarily know about it. Main roads are regularly monitored for defects, but minor roads are not covered as there aren't sufficient resources.

AK reported that the new school ramp has been installed and both AK and the school are delighted. The land isn't owned by highways and the ownership couldn't be established but highways did agree to do this work using 3 years of AK's Ward budget and some highways funding; the total cost was approximately £22,000. Both AK and the council agreed that the ramp looked good and that it was far better than some of the very utilitarian examples which can be seen elsewhere. The footpath between The Space Invader and the station is due to be repaired.

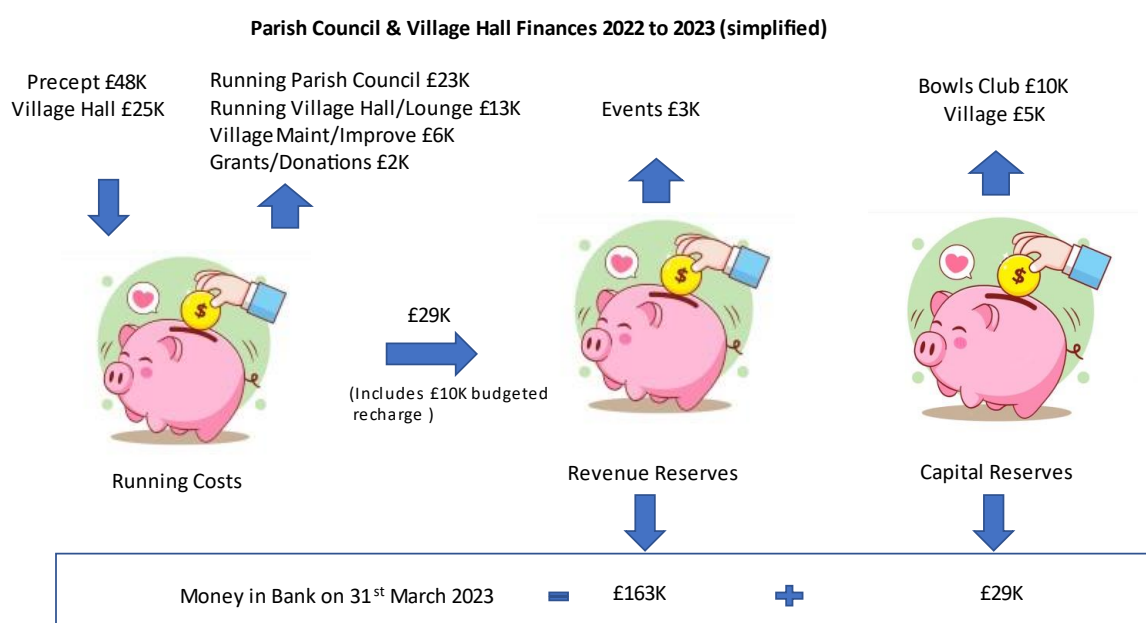
Ongoing problems include the sand leaching away underneath the road surface at Church Bank which is undermining its viability. Highways are aware and are keeping a close eye on it; they don't think that it constitutes a serious problem at the moment.

The condition of the road and the accidents that have occurred on the Jodrell Bank/Terra Nova stretch of the A535. Highways have been out to look at it and their opinion is that the signage is adequate, the road surface is adequate but that the white lining needs reinstating in some places.

The Planning department is understaffed, and the department is incredibly busy. There is currently a 3 to 6 month lead time between submission of an application and resolution, longer if the application is complex. Most applications are dealt with by Planning Officers under delegated authority. Larger and more complex applications go to planning committee which can be interesting as the public can see the decision making process. Parish Councillors also attend these meetings, when it is appropriate, to put the council's case on behalf of the community. AK assured those listening that the evidence that Parish Councils provide is taken extremely seriously as are the views of residents.

Cllr. Ross requested that the minutes reflect the Parish Council's appreciation for the enormous amount of work that Cllr. Kolker does on behalf of the village.

6. **Finance Review:** Cllr. O'Donoghue presented the finance review on behalf of Cllr. Morris, Chairman of the Finance Committee, who was unable to be present. Cllr. Morris had prepared some slides to demonstrate, in a simplified way, the council's finances and the money available to spend.



## Money in Bank

**£163K + £29K = £192K to spend? ❌ Wrong**

• One Year's Precept & Village Hall Contingency	£70K
• Village Hall Recharge owed to Cheshire East (2018-2023)	£52K
• Election Fee	£7K
• Village Hall Maintenance (Floor)	£2K
• Neighbourhood Plan Renewal	£12K
• Grants and Donations	£7K
• Village Hall Projects (windows)	£9K
• Village Projects	£16K
• Others	£2K
• <b>Total Committed but not spent</b>	<b>£177K</b>

**Total "available" £15K**

Although this demonstrates that the council has a lot less money to spend than may at first seem to be the case, it does show good budgeting and control over expenditure over the past year.

7. **Public Forum:** The following questions and comments were received from residents at the meeting:

- A member of the public asked Cllr. Kolker about what actions could be taken to improve safety on the Terra Nova School/Jodrell Bank stretch of the A535 as mentioned earlier in the meeting. Following an in depth debate it was agreed that the installation of average speed cameras would be a good idea. It would depend on whether the road fulfils the criteria required for the installation of cameras and that he would investigate this.
- A member of the public raised the issue of the conflict between motorists and cyclists in the village. It was confirmed that representatives from cycling clubs had visited local Parish Councils, including Goostrey, to offer to liaise with councils to resolve instances of poor behaviour from cyclists which was positive. On the recreational side of cycling, motorists have got to get used to the changes in the Highway Code as it relates to cyclists. The council's Speed Detection Units show that 60% of the vehicles travelling through the village are speeding so personal responsibility does play a part in making roads safer.
- A resident asked for an update on two issues, firstly the issue of the tree on Main Road lifting the pavement and secondly, the possibility of traffic lights on railway bridge.

Tree on Main Road – The council has written to Highways to ask for a formal review of the road safety in this location and the council is now awaiting their responses. This is the latest in a number of steps taken to resolve this issue. The council is aware of the differing views on this in the community and are conscious that any action doesn't make the situation worse. For example, highways may say that the pavement is dangerous and close it, forcing everyone to cross the road twice on a bend where 60% of the vehicles are speeding.

Traffic Lights - The council has liaised with Highways and they are looking to get this into a future capital programme but this is very much in the future. It was one of the five highway priorities that the council submitted to CEC at their request.

- A member of the public commented that although the reasons for raising the hire fees for the Village Hall were accepted, many organisations were being negatively affected by the additional cleaning fees. The Clerk advised that the support services also included the time it takes to set up and take down all the seating and equipment required. This service isn't compulsory and if groups can do their own set up and take down then this would reduce the cost. Fees have been kept at the same level for 2023/24.
- The secretary of the VHPFF thanked the Parish Council, on behalf of the trustees, for the generous £10,000 grant towards the building of the bowling pavilion. The bowlers are delighted and there will be a formal opening on 13<sup>th</sup> May.
- A resident thanked Cllr. Kolker for his efforts to have the school ramp installed, making the car park accessible for all. He felt that it was a good job, had been done well and he was pleased to see it.

**The meeting closed at 8.45pm**