



# Goostrey Parish Council

The Village Hall  
Goostrey  
Cheshire  
CW4 8PE  
01477 535825

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on Thursday 25th April 2024 at 7.30pm in the Main Hall, Village Hall

Present: Cllrs. Morgan (PM) (Vice Chairman), Rathbone (TR) Beckham (NB), Freeman (AF), Morris (KM), Craggs (DC), Fagan (PF),

In attendance: Cllr. A Kolker (AK) and Cllr. R. Chadwick (RC) - Cheshire East Council (CEC) Ward Councillors, Emma Bambrook - Clerk to the Council, 10 Members of the Public.

- 1. Welcome & Introduction:** Cllr. Morgan, Vice Chairman of the Parish Council, introduced himself and explained that he would be chairing the meeting in the absence of Cllr. O'Donoghue, the Parish Council Chairman. Cllr. Morgan welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting.
- 2. Apologies for absence:** Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mooney, Hall and O'Donoghue.
- 3. Minutes:** The minutes of the last meeting are available on the council website and can be viewed here <https://goostreyparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/APM-Minutes-2023-Draft-1.pdf> The address for this was available as a link on the electronic version of the agenda or could be typed into a search engine for those who had a hard copy of the agenda, where it was noted that alternative formats were available from the Clerk.

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023 were accepted as true record of the meeting.

- 4. Chairman's Report 2023-2024:** Cllr Paul Morgan, Vice Chairman of the Parish Council, delivered his report for 2023/24. The Parish Council members and staff, as well as the two Cheshire East Ward Councillors for Dane Ward.

**How the Parish Council Works:** PM provided an overview of how the Parish Council works including its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations which provide the framework for council governance. The meeting was reminded that all Council and Committee meetings are open for the public to attend, apart from the Staff Committee due to the nature of the items which are discussed.

**Finance Committee:** Monitors budgets and costs and is responsible for considering and recommending approval of grant applications and donations to the council. Cllr. Ken Morris is Chairman.

**Amenities Committee:** This committee is chaired by Cllr. Terence Rathbone. The committee manages budgets and contracts for cutting the grass in the graveyard and in other grassed areas around the village, planters, planting and maintaining village assets.

**Planning Committee:** Chaired by Cllr. Morris who was key in the development of the Goostrey Neighbourhood Plan.

**Staff Committee:** Looks after the staff and their employment and is chaired by Cllr. Ian O'Donoghue.

**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. Chaired by Cllr. Neil Beckham.

Councillors' appointments to external organisations and bodies were also noted including Highways, Police, Speed Watch, Jodrell Bank Observatory and Sibelco Rudheath Quarry. These roles help the council to remain apprised of other organisations' activities and build working relationships in the interests of the community.

The council also support a range of local groups such as the Rose Day Festival, Goostrey Footpaths Group the Goostrey Community Playground Project.

#### **Achievements, Developments, Progress and Issues in 2023/24**

- Village Projects – Benches and planters were refreshed as a result of the annual equipment inspection. Three of the benches had reached the end of their useful life and were replaced.
- New Village Maintenance Contract – Congleton Town Council have been engaged to carry out village maintenance such as grass, hedge cutting and graveyard maintenance.
- Commenting on various CEC consultations and proposals.
- 77 Main Road tree – A long running issue that is now with the CEC Road Safety Team to design a plan to address this issue.
- Stream bank by Shearbrook – The Parish Council are keeping a close eye on this to ensure CEC addresses this issue.

#### **Donations and Grants in 2023/24**

Funds are set aside each year each year for good causes in the parish, available to local organisation as a grant. This year the council provided grants to the following organisations and events:

- Goostrey Tots
- Post Office relocation
- WI Coronation Tapestry
- Goostrey Open Gardens
- D-Day +80 Celebrations

#### **Looking Forward to 2024/25**

- Village Projects – Churchbank Corner is due to be revamped to create an attractive entrance to the village. The crocuses planted in commemoration of the pandemic, followed by the daffodils here are doing well.
- D-Day +80 Celebrations – The event on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 12pm – 4pm, at the Scout Hut will feature vintage vehicles, heritage and refreshments to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day. The highlight will be a 10 minute display by a spitfire at about 2pm.
- Rose Day – 29<sup>th</sup> June. Now well over 100 years old as an event it is well worth supporting.
- Christmas lights event – 1<sup>st</sup> December. There will be an event on the Bogbean organised by the Parish Council, in collaboration with St. Luke's Church.
- Seniors' Lunch – 8<sup>th</sup> December. Following the retirement of the usual caterer, there will be a new caterer this year with a new menu and choices.
- Goostrey Community Playground Project (Boothbed Lane) – As a result of the construction of the houses on Blackberry Drive, Cheshire West Council received £40,000 of Section 106 money to improve play in Cheshire West due to the increase in residents there. The money was going to be invested in a play area in Northwich, when a resident pointed out that this was a long way from the housing development on the outskirts of Goostrey. The funding

was reallocated to Cheshire East Council who then allocated it for play in Goostrey. There is still a long way to go but CEC are going to manage and deliver the project, as it is their asset. The project is due to start sometime this year, hopefully with the addition of grant funding for £100,000 meaning that there could be a total of £140,000 to be invested in the play area.

### **Special Mentions**

- FoGS – Recently won a national photo competition of the Beavers working on the station steps to add to their trophy collection. The council and community owe thanks to FoGS for the way they maintain the station.
- Tree Ranger – A new volunteer has been recruited who can be contacted with any concerns.
- Goostrey Footpaths Group – Approached the council recently to see how the council can collaborate better with them. One of their aims is to establish a footpath from the railway station to Jodrell Bank.
- St Luke’s Church - Coach trips have been set up to try to tackle social isolation.
- Goostrey Parish Archive – Will be supporting the D-Day event in June and are a great asset to the village.
- There are a great many organisations in Goostrey who do fantastic work and there is a directory of community groups in the back of the Parish Magazine for those who would like to get involved.

### **5. Cllrs. Andrew Kolker and Russell Chadwick, Cheshire East Council Update:**

Cllr. Kolker spoke about finance at Cheshire East Council.

#### **What is a Section 114 Notice?**

This is issued by a council’s section 151 Officer when it appears that the council’s expenditure will exceed the resources it has available in a particular year. The Sections refer to the Local Government Act and a 151 Officer is the chief financial officer of the council who is personally responsible for ensuring that financial procedure is followed and that a balanced budget is approved. When a 114 notice is issued, the council is stating that it doesn’t have enough money to fulfil their liabilities which in business would mean they are bankrupt. Councils don’t technically go bankrupt but they can declare they don’t have enough money to fulfil their obligations.

Before 2018 there had only been one s114 notice, there are now 14 councils in this position. Usually this occurs for a specific reason or because of a particular event. Birmingham City Council, the biggest council in the country by some margin, had to issue a s114 notice due to a £1 billion equal pay claim against them and a failed IT system. Nottingham City Council lost millions of pounds when their council owned energy company went bankrupt. However, this isn’t the whole story.

The way councils are funded has changed, funding used to come from council tax, fees and charges (from planning applications for example) and government grant funding. Council tax and fees and charges have increased but government grant funding has decreased to almost zero. Councils still receive grant funding but it tends to be for specific purposes rather than being a general subsidy. The council still collects Business Rates but it doesn’t keep them rather, it goes into a pot and is redistributed. The logic is that some authorities have substantial social demands but don’t have that many businesses so the funding goes where it is needed.

#### **What are the pressures on CEC?**

CEC must fulfil its statutory services, of which two are Adults Social Care and Childrens Social Care. Of the total £360 million budget, adult care accounts for £89 million and Childrens care accounts for £137 million. Therefore, any changes in the requirements have a substantial effect on what is

left for other services. Costs have increased due to an ageing population and the cost of providing care for children. £11 million has been spent on trying to get HS2 to Crewe, this has now been cancelled from Birmingham onwards. Money was borrowed to pay for the bid but because the project doesn't now exist, there's no longer an asset to borrow against and so the loan must be repaid.

Other statutory services include waste collection, roads and libraries. There is a requirement for the authority to provide a library service, although what the service must look like isn't stipulated so there is pressure to reduce it.

### What are the consequences of a Section 114 notice?

- It is personally and professionally embarrassing for the Section 151 Officer.
- Stops are put on any new non-statutory contracts.
- The council will need to respond very quickly with a revised budget to show how it will make savings.
- The government can appoint administrators to run the council.
- The council may be allowed to use capital reserves for revenue.
- Ultimately, the council could be abolished and replaced with a new authority.

### Will CEC go bust?

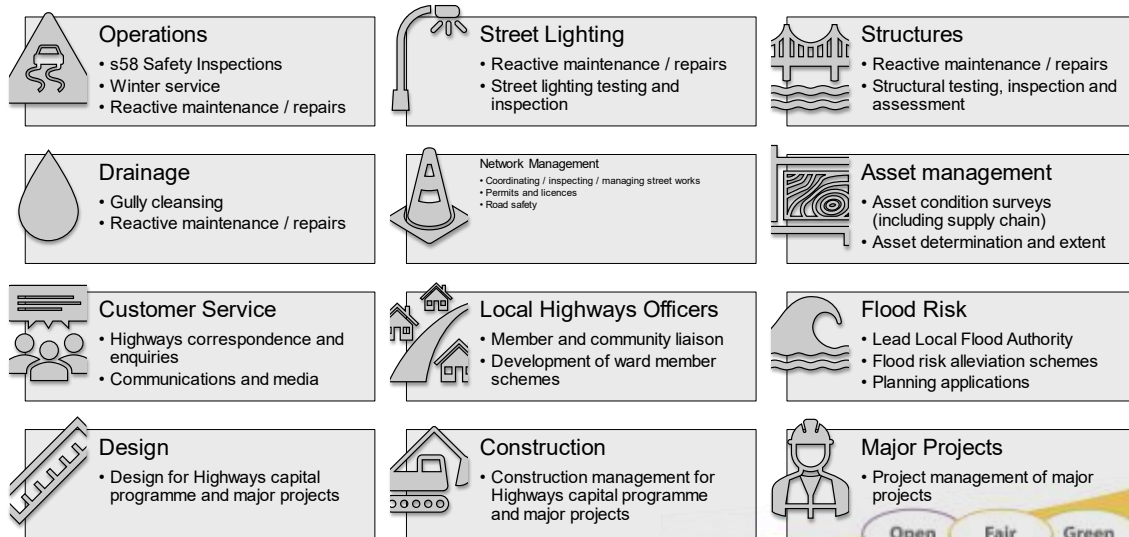
There is a balanced budget but out of a £360 million budget, reserves are down to £1.1 million. The government have approved funds of £17.6 million but that will have to be repaid. The council is in a serious situation.

Cllr. Chadwick has been a councillor for some years and was recently voted on to CEC. The Dane Valley ward covers Holmes Chapel, Cranage, Twemlow and Goostrey and time is split between the parishes. Cllr. Chadwick spoke about Highway, how it is structured and the problems that are faced.

RC highlighted the various teams that make up the Highways and Infrastructure Services Department as follows:

Operations, Street Lighting, Structures, Drainage, Network Management, Asset Management, Customer Service, Local Highways Officers, Flood Risk, Design, Construction and Major Projects.

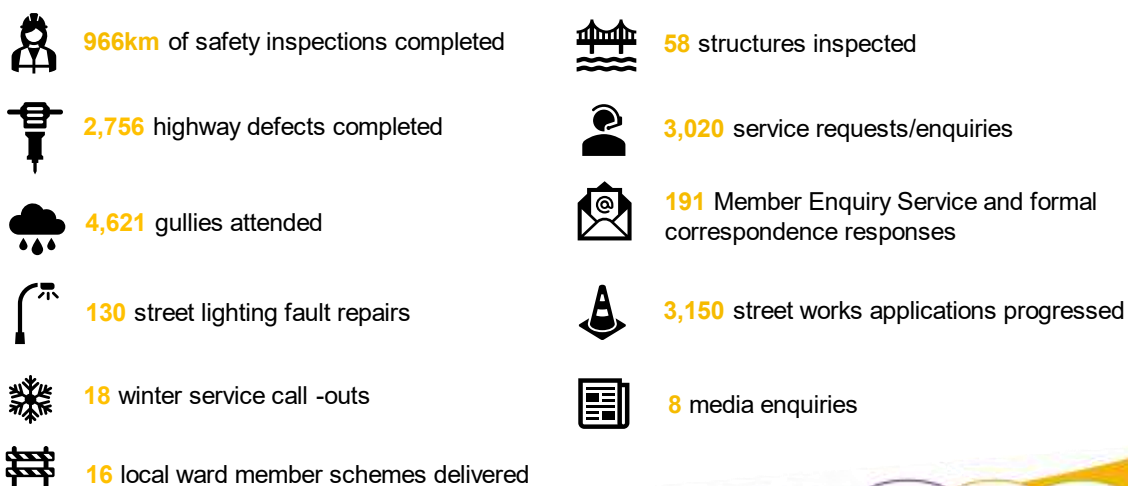
## Highways and Infrastructure Services



Flood risk policies are due to be renewed due to the damage caused to roads caused by adverse weather conditions.

RC presented the metrics for March 2024 which demonstrated work completed such 966km of safety inspections, 18 winter service winter callouts, 4,621 gullies attended, 2,756 highways defects completed and 3,150 street works applications progressed. Street works is work completed by United utilities for example. CEC are currently looking at a system where, if more than one contractor (for example utility companies) needs to complete work on the same part of the network, they need to liaise with other contractors to establish whether other work is required in that area in the near future and co-ordinate so that one stretch of road isn't disrupted multiple times.

## Monthly Metrics



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Open Fair Green

The requirement for managing a declining road network is £22 million of revenue and £30 million of capital per annum. What the council actually have is £11.5 million revenue and £19 million capital. RC's role on Highways is trying to persuade the administration to give Highways more money and also lobbying Fiona Bruce MP, on how the loss of HS2 can be mitigated. Due to budget constraints, everything is prioritised on a risk based and/or asset led approach.

### Severe Weather Impact

- 10 named storm events, from September-January
- 3,647 drainage enquiries received in the last 12 months, of which 3,016 came after September
- Diverted existing resource and attended 200 additional sites & cleaned an additional 1,000 enquiries
- In addition to this operation of the winter gritting service
- The freeze/thaw and very wet conditions are ripe for pothole creation, forecast to repair 29,930 defects – the highest on record

RC advised that defects with existing items such as streetlights or potholes should be reported using 'FixMyStreet' which is monitored constantly by CEC.

Over the last 5 years Cheshire East Council has invested a total of £141m into maintaining the highway network within the Borough with £71m of that investment supported through grant funding from the Department of Transport. Made possible by reallocated HS2 funding, CEC will now receive an additional £110 million of Government funding for highway maintenance repairs

between 2023 and 2034. This will allow the authority to deliver more highway maintenance schemes across the Borough which might not have otherwise been undertaken.

RC also demonstrated a link which shows all of the planned work in the borough, including Goostrey <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/42c90f6e607a4f9d8a51340b93e77bf7/>

6. **Finance Review:** Cllr. Morris, Chairman of the Finance Committee, provided an overview of the Parish Council’s finances for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

During 2023/2024 Parish Council income was £80,155.72 and most of this comes from the precept which is money that is collected, via council tax, from each household in Goostrey. Village Hall lettings, bank interest and VAT refunds. Payments totalled £80,783.83 and the difference between income and expenditure was balanced using some of the council’s reserves.

## Income and Expenditure

• Income =	<b>£80,155.72</b>
• Precept	<b>£50,680</b>
• V/H Lettings	<b>£20,596</b>
• Bank Interest	<b>£4,129</b>
• VAT	<b>£4,056</b>
• Others	<b>£694</b>

• Payments =	<b>£80,738.83</b>
• Salaries, NI etc	<b>£33,133</b>
• Cheshire East Council	<b>£12,285</b>
• Village Maintenance	<b>£11,352</b>
• Grants	<b>£5,990</b>
• Insurance, Subs, etc	<b>£5568</b>
• Events	<b>£4,718</b>
• VAT	<b>£3,987</b>
• VH Maintenance	<b>£3,702</b>

## Reserves

### Reserves ‘Ring-Fenced’:

• Precept & Village Hall Contingency	£46K
• Village Hall Monies owed to Cheshire East (2021 -2024)	£38K
• Election Fee	£7K
• Neighbourhood Plan Renewal	£12K
• Grants, Donations and Events	£8K
• Boothbed Lane Playground Project	£11K
• Others	£2K
• Village Hall Projects (incl. windows)	£9K
• Village Projects	£11K
<b>Total</b>	<b>£144K</b>
• Revenue Reserves (Not Ring-Fenced)	<b>£28K</b>
• Capital (Not Ring -Fenced)	<b>£5K</b>
<b>General Fund Remaining</b>	<b>£16K</b>

Most the council's reserves are earmarked for contingencies or future projects. Budget and Precept information can be viewed on the website at <https://goostreyparishcouncil.gov.uk/documents-base/budget/> and accounts and audit information can be found at <https://goostreyparishcouncil.gov.uk/document-category/accounts/audit/>

### **Local Plan Consultation**

Cllr. Morris is also Chairman of the Planning Committee and drew the meeting's attention to the preparations being made by CEC for the New Local Plan which refers primarily to housing. The current Local Plan runs from 2010 – 2030 but CEC have agreed to create a new plan which will run up into the 2040's. The government's methodology has not yet been published in detail but CEC can undertake preparatory work and a number of documents have been issued for consultation prior to 1st July, mainly concerning the approaches that should be used when the new Local Plan is being produced. The Parish Council will consider all the documents in detail and make the appropriate comments for Goostrey; however, the public can also comment.

The Parish Council's view is that Goostrey should not be categorised as a Local Service centre and would advise residents to respond in this way. When the last Local Plan was created, Goostrey was categorised as a Local Service Centre despite the services available in the village being limited and the bus service having been cut drastically since then. Jodrell Bank Observatory also objects to all new planning applications to protect its research work and UNESCO World Heritage Status.

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

- A resident asked how they could respond to the Local Plan Consultation. KM advised that typing Cheshire East Local Plan consultation into a search engine will find this. A comment can be submitted in this way or via email. KM also advised that he would be happy to help and that, if the resident experienced any difficulties, they could contact the Clerk who would put the two in contact.
- A resident queried whether Goostrey's current Neighbourhood Plan is still relevant to the plans being made now. KM confirmed that at the top level, the government have a document called the National Planning Policy Framework, underneath that the local authority has its Local Plan and finally Goostrey has its Neighbourhood Plan. When CEC have completed the Local Plan, the Parish Council will revise the Neighbourhood Plan. Currently the Neighbourhood Plan is still valid.
- KM asked RC when £110 million of Government funding for highway maintenance repairs would be available and could it be spent on repairing potholes? RC confirmed that it runs from 2023 – 2034 and his view is that this should be spent on improving the network generally rather than on capital projects.
- TR asked whether there are any serious efforts being made to look at reducing the extremely high cost of capital projects? The Middlewich By-Pass has been put on hold by the government. Costs have increased by approximately 50% and the government has requested an explanation.

**The meeting closed at 8.40pm**