

**Minutes of the Gressingham Annual Parish Meeting**  
**Held on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2025**  
**in the grounds of Gressingham Hall**

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**Present:** Martin Brooks (Chair), Rosemary Blanchfield, Christine Grieve, John Hamlett, Moyra Jacques, Jon Laughton, Mary McClements, Jane Paxman, Sally Riley, Lynne Rowling, Michelle Skinner, Nigel Bottomley, Alice Helyar, David Wiper, Isobelle Wiper, Sam Chadwick, Chris Chadwick, Paul Brooks, Jan Brooks, Matthew Mercer, Becky Mercer, Lesley Lee (note-taker).

**Apologies** were received from Rosie Smith, Neil Read and Jayne Leaf.

**1.Preliminaries.**

The Chair of Gressingham Parish Council, Martin Brooks (MB), outlined the purpose of the Annual Parish Meeting (which is open to everyone registered on the electoral roll in Gressingham Civil Parish) and explained that in accordance with established convention, the Chair of the PC would chair the meeting and the Clerk to the PC, Les Lee would take the minutes.

**2. 2024 Gressingham Annual Parish Meeting minutes and matters arising.**

The minutes of the 2024 Gressingham Annual Parish Meeting (which had been circulated following the 2024 meeting via the Gress and posted both on the Gressingham village noticeboard and on the Gressingham PC website) were ratified.

**3.Gressingham Village Trust (GVT)**

**a). Confirmation of Trustees.**

Martin Brooks reminded the meeting that the Gressingham Annual Parish Meeting oversees the appointment of the GVT trustees.

Under its current constitution, the GVT requires seven trustees. Three are *ex-officio* appointments: the Vicar of Gressingham or nominee, and the two Gressingham churchwardens OR (in the absence of churchwardens) up to two individuals to be appointed by the Gressingham Parochial Church Council. The other four trustees are appointed by the Gressingham Annual Parish Meeting. It was reported that:

- The three *ex-officio* trustees are currently:

Vicar of Gressingham:	<b>Lucie Lunn</b>
Gressingham Churchwarden:	vacancy
Gressingham PCC appointee:	<b>Louise Stevens</b>
- the *appointed* trustees are:

<b>John Hamlett</b>	– to 2028 (Treasurer)
<b>Rosie Smith</b>	- to 2025
<b>Martin Brooks</b>	- to 2026
<b>Jane Paxman</b>	- to May 2027 (Chair)

It was noted that:

- the term of office of Rosie Smith was due to expire on the date of the Annual Parish Meeting 2025 but she has very kindly volunteered to serve again for a four year term until 2029. Her appointment was proposed by Martin Brooks and seconded by Lynn Rowling.

**It was agreed unanimously that Rosie Smith should be reappointed as a trustee of the GVC for a further four year period until May 2029.**

#### **b. Other GVT issues**

The Chair of the GVT, Jane Paxman, gave a summary of the financial situation, noting that the majority of the GVT outgoings were being spent on electricity and insurance. Income mostly coming from rental and the annual Parish Council donation. Sir Nick Pearson has gifted £25,000 to the GVT (from the winding up of the Pearson Trust) which will be available in the next few weeks. Currently there is £61,500 in the GVT accounts. £15,000 is set aside as a contingency to cover cost over-runs or loss of income during a tenancy gap, leaving the balance available for running costs building repairs. The trust will need around £30,000 for the re-roofing and it is hoped this will be started in October. The Parish Council has approved a grant of £1000 towards the cost of the re-roofing which will be paid once work commences. A £4000 grant has also been received from Halton Lune Trust. Over the next few years the OSR will need work on damp repairs, sound proofing for the ceiling, new lighting, windows, doors, heating and a new kitchen.

#### **4.Report from The Gress**

John Hamlett reported that the following events had been organised and supported by The Gress during 2024/5: Martin/Michele curry night, bird and bat boxes had been made and put up around the village, pie and peas AGM (The Fellowship now to be part of GVT and to be renamed The Gress), Rome night, Village BBQ, Pickle Ball taster, Christmas punch and pies, pop-up pub nights. Thank you to all those who have organised these events. Accounts for The Gress have been incorporated into the GVT accounts and The Gress currently has £8,500 available. The Gress committee has agreed that £5000 of this should be put towards the OSR repair costs.

It was noted that the Gress committee consisted of: Christine Grieve - Chair, Frances Hamlett - Secretary, John Hamlett – Treasurer, Alex Philips, Rosie Smith, Alice Helyar.

#### **4.5 Grafters**

Christine Grieve explained that Grafters was established in November 2023 and now has 8-10 regular members who meet each week. They spent time on various craft projects and noted that, non-knitter, Michele has learned how to knit and has now made over 23 items. The group has £520 in the bank and they paid £240 to have the old school clock serviced from their fundraising.

#### **5.Report from the Parochial Church Council**

Mary McClements gave a summary of the Church Council. Major repairs are required to the roof. Currently there is netting under the most vulnerable parts to catch falling plaster which has been funded by the Diocese. The Church is on the 'At Risk in Need of Attention' List. Funding will be required from different sources; it was questioned if there is any financial help from the Diocese. They are looking into every possible source available. Donations

from the congregation are reducing because fewer people are attending the services. Worship continued during Covid. The vicar's husband, Ramsey Lunn, is now a churchwarden. It was reminded that the village could make donations to the PCC whilst shopping online at several stores, details of which would be published again in the village newsletter in due course.

## **6. Report on the work of the Parish Council**

The chair started a discussion asking how residents found out about news and events in the village. The overwhelming majority of people said they relied on the village email newsletter published by John Hamlett. The WhatsApp chat was also mentioned as being very useful. It was noted that although the current noticeboard was small and difficult to access, it was rarely looked at. The general consensus was that a new larger noticeboard in a better location was not good use of the very limited Parish Council funds.

MB then ran through the Parish Council Annual Report for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, which is available on the Parish Council website [www.gressinghampc.org.uk](http://www.gressinghampc.org.uk). Highlighting the following:

- membership and meeting arrangements, noting that the following people had been re-elected at the Annual Parish Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024 to serve until 2027:

**Martin Brooks** (chair)

**Michele Luxon** (vice-chair)

**Grant Parker**

**Neil Read**

**Sally Riley**

and that **Lesley Lee** has now taken over the role of Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer from **Lesley Wareing** from: 01/06/2025. Lesley W has done a fantastic job for the PC and thanks to Lesley L for applying to be the new clerk.

- The availability of agendas, minutes and other information on the PC website.
- The PC finances including the 2024/25 precept and the creation of a modest pot of money to which other village organisations could apply for funding via an application form.
- The continuance of the Community Emergency Plan. The recent gas leak has reminded the PC to add this eventuality to the plan at the next revision.
- Planning applications. There were six applications during the year, for which the Parish Council was consulted on.
- Road safety and traffic issues including:
  - i) The continuing operation and maintenance two Speed Indicator Devices – for which thanks to Neil Read were recorded.
  - ii) A replacement traffic mirror has been installed by the PC at the bottom Tenter Hill, which was also cleared of vegetation yesterday.
  - iii) Pothole outside Gressingham Hall where there have been two cyclist accidents needing hospital treatment recently. This has now been repaired.
  - iv) Broken step at White Bridges has been repaired by the County Council on request from the PC.

v) Working party to clear vegetation at White Bridges, thanks to Sally Riley for organising.

- Annual village litter pick during March, thanks to Tim Millar for organising.
- Maintenance of the village defibrillator, for which thanks to Sally Riley were recorded.

Sally Riley suggested that we should plant bulbs (provided by the PC) around the village in the autumn, maybe a bag of bulbs to any volunteers with some co-ordination where to plant to avoid duplication. This idea was well supported, Sally to investigate further.

### **6.5 History Website**

Sally Riley explained the progress of the new History Website. It just has the structure at the moment and they would like people to start looking at it. Christine and Neil have helped set up the website, Lesley W is contributing information, John and Nigel are the technical experts. There is a big archive of memorabilia and more available. It will include life in Gressingham pre 1945 and after. Send in your photos of your house with yourselves in if you wish and give permission for it to be inserted on the website. The types of houses, parish magazines, old photos, gas pipes, floods. but it will focus on mainly people. We are not seeking to replace the Millennium book, this is completely different.

Meeting closed at 19.53pm

**Lesley Lee**

**Clerk to Gressingham Parish Council**