

Gressingham Parish Council

Unconfirmed Minutes of the 404th
meeting
held on 31st March 2025

A meeting of Gressingham Parish Council was held on 31st March 2025 in which the following members participated: Martin Brooks (MB) (Chair), Michelle Luxon (ML), Grant Parker (GP), Neil Read (NR) and Sally Riley (SR)).

Geoff Eales and Karenni Caun (Lancaster Rural East Labour Party candidate for County Council election and constituency worker) attended.

404/1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from the Clerk, Lesley Wareing (LW).

404/2 Declarations of Interest

There were no initial declarations of interest.

404/3 Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th January 2025 were approved for signature by the Chair.

404/4 Matters arising from previous minutes (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

NR reported that the City Council Planning Department had confirmed that planning permission is not needed for the installation of a new Parish noticeboard. MB stated that views of parishioners would be sought at the Annual Parish meeting.

404/5 Finance and Governance

a) Financial statement to 31st March 2025.

It was reported that the end of year balance at 31st March 2025 was £5191.04. This included an uncleared cheque for £119.98 for the purchase of an external drive for the Gressingham Village History project as previously agreed by the PC.

It was noted that:

£3000 of the £5191.04 is the agreed reserve of £3000 and another £1000 is the amount of the previously agreed grant towards the cost of repairs to the OSR roof (originally planned for last autumn but which cannot now be done until November 2025);

the unspent amount remaining at 31st March 2025 is £1191. £1065 of this is accounted for as follows:

- the insurance premium was £215 less than budgeted*
- the Clerk drew only £300 remuneration instead of the £300 budgeted
- the purchase of new defibrillator pads (£170 budgeted) has been postponed until April 2025

- only £119.98 of the £500 budgeted has been needed so far for the Gressingham Village History website project.

The PC agreed that the reserve should be increased to £3500 for 2025/26 and the remaining surplus of £691 should be spent, as soon as possible in the new financial year, to purchase of another external drive together with a laptop (both to be the property of the PC but for use by the Clerk) plus files or other stationery as required.

It was also noted that the 2025/26 precept of £4000 will be paid in to the bank account shortly after 1st April 2025. This will give an opening balance for the 2025/26 FY of ~ £9191 of which:

- £3500 will be kept in reserve
- £1000 will be ringfenced for the grant towards the cost of the OSR roof repairs in November 2025
- ~£690 will be spent in April 2025 on IT equipment for the use of the new Clerk.

*PC members were reminded that the 2024/25 insurance premium was originally to have been £430 as part of the year agreement with Clear Councils Insurance but they had they reneged on the agreement after they had been taken over by another company. An alternative policy was negotiated with Zurich Municipal for a premium of £214. This was dealt with via email correspondence in February 2025.

RESOLVED:

- i) ***to approve the accounts to 31st March 2025 and that the chair should sign the financial statement;***
- ii) ***to maintain a reserve of £3500 for 2025/26***
- iii) ***to carry forward and ringfence £1000 for the grant to the OSR towards the cost of roof repairs;***
- iv) ***to authorise expenditure as set out above.***
(Proposed: MB, seconded ML) Action: LW

b) 2024/25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

It was reported that the Clerk had recently received email instructions for the 2024/25 review which looked to be similar to the previous year. The PC has not been selected as part of the random 5% sample required to undergo an intermediate audit so the PC would again be able to submit a Certificate of Exemption to the external auditors. Now that the 2024/25 accounts have been finalised and approved the Clerk will arrange for the internal audit to take place as soon as possible (Andrea Lumb has agreed to do this). This would be the first stage of the annual review process. Once the internal audit has been completed the PC will then need to approve all the documentation at its may meeting so that the Certificate of Exemption can submitted to the external auditors by the 1st July 2025 deadline.

RESOLVED: that a Certificate of Exemption should be submitted for the 2024/25 AGAR. (Proposed: MB, seconded SR) Action: LW

d) Recruitment of new Clerk

The Chair reported that Les Lee had been appointed as the new Clerk and RFO to the PC from 1st April 2025. The outgoing Clerk, Lesley Wareing, would carry out a handover process and would prepare the agendas for the May meeting of the PC and the Annual Parish Meeting and also complete the AGAR process in tandem with the new Clerk.

Thanks were expressed to LW for the highly efficient and extremely valuable work that Lesley has undertaken as Clerk and RFO to the Parish Council for the past 7 years. The Parish Council has benefitted significantly from Lesley's attention to detail, efficiency and expertise and we all wish her well in the future.

e) Model Financial Regulations and on-line banking

It was agreed that these would be adapted for Gressingham by the new Clerk in consultation with the Chair once the new on-line bank account with Unity Trust has been set up. This would ensure that all the correct signatories, delegations and authorisations can be agreed and set out in the financial regulations. **Action: LL/MB/ML**

MB has suggested that all Parish Councillors could act as signatories for the new account in future subject to the regulations associated with the establishment of the new account.

f) PC Annual Report

It was noted that the outgoing Clerk would draft the annual report in consultation with the Chair to be presented to the May meeting of the PC and then to the Annual Parish Meeting in late May. **Action: LW/MB**

g) Annual Parish Meeting

Councillors agreed to hold the next Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 27 May 2025 in advance of the Annual Parish meeting.

It was agreed to hold the meeting on Wednesday 28 May 2025 following the same format as in previous years. The Chair would liaise with the chair of Gressingham Village Trust about the suggested date. It was agreed to include an update of the village history website on the agenda. **Action: LW/MB**

h) Monitoring against Annual Governance Cycle

It was noted that the annual review of the Health and Safety Policy, Risk Assessments and the schedule of maintenance and safety checks would be dealt with at the May meeting. All other actions had been carried out at the required times and included in relevant agendas and minutes.

404/6 Gressingham and Eskrigge Community Emergency Plan (CEP)

NR reported that he had sent a redacted copy of the Plan to the City Council. The next review will include reporting on the recent gas leak.

404/7 Police and Crime reports update

It was reported that there had been a car theft from the mews cottage car park. Police had attended following a report made by the owner some days later.

404/8 Planning and Tree Works

It was noted that no new planning applications had been received for comment since the 20th January meeting. However the PC was reminded of the following:

- i 25/00257/AD - Borrans Farm (Deer Beck Farm) - the notification under the Permitted Agricultural Development process for a new agricultural building near Borrans. This was the subject of email discussion LW sent a response to the Planning Office but no decision has yet been made on this proposal;
- ii 25/00239/PLDC - Proposed lawful development certificate for a replacement roof on first floor flat and attached barn.

Following the rejection of a full planning application in 2024 to re-roof Sables Cottage and the attached barn with slate tiles, a lawful Development Certificate has now been granted to re-roof with sandstone flags.

404/9

Road maintenance and traffic

a) Traffic issues and road safety concerns (including SpIDs and mirrors)

It was noted that the Clerk had not yet contacted the County Council about arrangements for the deployment of 'Road Close Due to Flooding' signs in Gressingham village.

Action: LW/LL

b) SpIDS

It was noted that NR had completed the annual check of the SpIDs and both are working effectively.

c) Road fault reports

The faults shown on the LoveCleanStreets website were noted but there was no information available as to status or progress.

SR stated that the line of circular shaped subsidence and breaking up of the road surface along Fall Kirk from Herst Cottage down to the end of the mews cottages continues to worsen and even though reported by both Jane Paxman and SR, no action had yet been taken by LCC Highways department.

Action: LW/LL to raise the report again on LoveCleanStreets and to pursue the contact person within Highways seeking a resolution.

404/10

Amenities and facilities

a) White Bridges path

It was reported that Lancashire County Council has now completed repairs to the stone steps on the Box Tree Farm end of the path. Councillors agreed that 'thanks' should be passed to the County Council for the work completed making the steps much safer. Councillors also agreed that 'thanks' should be expressed for the installation of a new gate stile on the footpath towards High Dam.

Action: LW/LL

c) 2025 Litter Pick

A litter pick organised by Alice Helyer and Tim Millar had been held on Saturday 7th March 2025 and had been well supported. The PC recorded its thanks to Tim Millar, Alice Helyer and all the volunteers.

d) Defibrillator update

SR reported that the Parish Council had received a warning note from Zoll Medical, the manufacturers of our G5 Powerheart defibrillator regarding an error code which had appeared on 2,500 AEDs world-wide preventing them from working. It appears that damp/condensation entering the AED/cabinet was the cause and we were asked to check our AED was working properly and to complete a form confirming this for Zoll Medical. SR had undertaken the check and returned the form.

Clearly the new cabinet with its improved heating and condensation monitor has made a significant difference to our machine. Battery life is at 72% and a replacement pad will be ordered in late April 2025 as required.

Action: SR

e) PTWG update.

Nothing to report.

40411

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 27th May 2025 was agreed for the annual meeting of the PC meeting at which a chair and vice-chair would need to be elected.

It was also agreed to organise the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 28th May 2025 at Gressingham Hall subject to Jane Paxman's agreement.

Action LW/MB

Note: these minutes are unconfirmed until ratified by the next meeting of Gressingham Parish Council