

# Gressingham Parish Council

## **Report on the work of Gressingham Parish Council for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.**

### **Parish Council meetings and membership**

Covid-19 restrictions prevented the Parish Council from holding physical “face-to-face” meetings from March 2020 until May 2021 and meetings were held by video-conference instead. Although this was not ideal, it worked well enough for the PC to conduct all its business at the due times and members of the public were able to join the Zoom meetings if they wished to do so. Since May 2020, the PC has been holding physical meetings although these have been held outside (not ideal) given that several of the meeting participants were unwilling to meet in a confined indoor space due to Covid-19 concerns.

Current PC membership: Martin Brooks (Chair), Michele Luxon (Vice-chair), Penny Foulds (to 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022), Grant Parker, Neil Read. Lesley Wareing is Clerk.

All meeting agendas and minutes are published on the Parish Council website together with accounts, audit reports and other relevant items.

[www.gressinghampc.org.uk](http://www.gressinghampc.org.uk)

### **Finance and Governance**

The Precept for 2020/21 was increased from the previous year by £170 to £2000 and by a further £400 to £2400 for 2021/22. This was a continuation of the PC’s policy of building up its seriously depleted reserves to allow a contingency fund for emergencies or unforeseen events and also to allow planned expenditure on items which benefit the whole community such as Speed Indicator Devices (SpIDs) and other road safety measures. The PC decided not to increase the Precept for 2022/23 but to keep it at £2400. A new PC website was set up, and the code of practice updated.

### **Gressingham and Eskrigge Community Emergency Plan (CEP)**

The CEP Group met in March 2020, following which a Community Emergency Plan was produced and lodged with key players for use in an emergency. Fortunately, there has been no reason to activate it thus far.

### **Neighbourhood Watch**

A scheme has been set up for Gressingham and Eskrigge.

### **Planning Applications**

The PC continued to receive planning applications for comment. Of particular concern during this review period, because of the visual impact and the potential for increased traffic through Gressingham, were the proposals for housing developments in Hornby. An application for 23 houses on land just off the Melling Road (next to the Hornby Bank estate) was approved by LCC as was an application for 11 houses at the rear of Ingleborough View at the south end of Hornby. The application for 76 single and two-storey homes plus a one-and-a-half storey medical centre on land at the north end of Hornby at the Priory Farm site on Fleet Lane is still ongoing. **See Appendix for more details.**

### **Road safety and traffic issues:**

- There are now two illuminated Speed Indicator signs (SpID) on Fall Kirk in Gressingham. The one located at the west end of the village is powered from the mains supply at Hilltop, and we are grateful to Stuart & Josephine Piner for their cooperation and generosity in facilitating this. A request for a third SpID in Rabbit Lane was turned down by the County Council, but a new “hi-viz” speed limit sign plus a “Please Drive Carefully” sign has been promised.
- The introduction of a 20 mph limit throughout Gressingham and Eskrigge is being explored with the County Council, following the parish council’s on-line consultation which showed that residents overwhelmingly supported the proposal.
- The **traffic mirror** which was installed opposite the Tenter Hill/Fall Kirk junction (near the Old School Room) at the request of residents, has been moved to a better location, with thanks to Tom & Aoife Mullen at Valley Cottage. (The traffic mirror at Relph Cottage at the Church Brow/Fall Kirk junction was renewed in April 2022).
- Parking at **Loyn Bridge** was a major problem during the summer of 2020 during the first lockdown. Double yellow lines on the Gressingham side have been requested and are under consideration by the County Council.

**Road Maintenance:** The PC regularly monitors and reports instances of damage to the roads in and around the village. Faults can be reported on the County Council website (which is available for anyone to use), and individual issues are chased up with the Highways Dept by the PC when necessary. “Faults” can include potholes, other road damage, and blocked or damaged grids, drains and culverts which may result in flooding that can cause major problems for road users and householders.

**White Bridges:** The PC has been concerned about the slippery conditions that develop during winter months on the footpath leading over the ‘White Bridges’ and work has been done to keep these as clear as possible. Residents have also worked hard to clear weeds and tree overgrowth from the area and the PC is hoping to fund and organise repairs to the bridge railing this summer.

**Footpath Maintenance:** Three annual grants for public footpath maintenance work were obtained from the County Council. Many miles of footpaths have been cleared and every stile repaired.

**Litter Picks** organised by David Wiper have been held each year.

Thankfully **the Defibrillator** has not had to be used during this review period. It is regularly checked by Sally Riley and the PC pays for new batteries and pads.

**Martin Brooks (Chair)**  
**Lesley Wareing (Clerk)**  
**May 2022**

## **Appendix: Story Homes Planning Application 18/01165/HYB**

The Parish Council continues to oppose the Application by Story Homes to build 76 single and two-storey homes plus a one-and-a-half storey medical centre on land north of OneFocus School Hornby at the Priory Farm site on Fleet Lane. The Application has yet to be considered by Lancaster City Council Planning Regulatory Committee even though it has been running since 2017 and revised in 2018. Thus far, 65% of public consultees object to the proposals alongside key statutory agencies including Natural England, Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Local Flooding Agency. However, this is a complex Application which requires sensitive responses from the Parish Council.

Members of the Parish Council have attended three zoom and face-to-face meetings of Hornby Parish Council, at their kind invitation, where representatives of Story Homes and their highways consultancy have been present. Despite our ongoing efforts, it is clear that Story Homes intend to make no concessions to our objections which are based upon legally specified planning criteria. Indeed, the Applicant has further developed its proposals to alter the A683 Melling Road/Fleet Lane junction to propose a major/minor junction with a 'ghost island' as well as entering into some form of partnership with Morecambe Bay Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Lunesdale Surgery which envisages a new medical centre offering community health services on the Priory Farm site to replace the existing satellite surgery at the south end of Hornby.

The Parish Council acknowledges the quality of health provision that residents enjoy via Lunesdale Surgery and appreciates that the provision of land/premises through partnership with Story Homes provides a significant incentive for local health services. In response, the Parish Council has written to both the CCG and the Surgery to share our concerns and to seek further discussion on alternative sites for new medical facilities. Story Homes claim that their development should be allowed under exceptional circumstances and in the public interest whereas the Parish Council stresses that the provision of a new medical centre would be ancillary to the requirement for 76 houses and not the other way around.

The Parish Council maintains that Story Homes' Application should be classed as a 'major' development and that the design and scale of the development is not sympathetic to its locality and does not complement its local setting or settlement character within the protected landscape of the AONB. The proposed development would compromise the primary purpose and special qualities of the AONB which is to conserve and protect the landscape qualities of this nationally important designation.

The Parish Council has prepared a statement of objection for presentation at the Planning Regulatory Committee once a date for consideration of Story's Application has been determined. The Parish Council is also seeking active support from residents to express our vehement objections to Story Homes' Application as the need arises.

**Sally Riley**  
**Gressingham Parish Council**