

MINUTES OF THE LOSTOCK GRALAM ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 11TH MAY 2026 AT THE CHURCH HALL

The meeting commenced at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Parish Councillors M Venables, M Litton, K Hodgkinson, T Hodges, I Parkinson, P Walker, P Cobley, T Smith, and A Ross.

IN ATTENDANCE: L Sandison, Clerk

ALSO

IN ATTENDANCE: Parish Reader G Sheen, Community Centre Member A Ingham, CWAC Cllr M Stocks and two members of the public.

The Chairman opened the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

It was **RESOLVED** to accept apologies from PCSO P Hambleton. Noted that Cllr Cashmore's apologies had been submitted prior to the meeting but was only seen after the meeting closed.

2. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 12th May 2025, having been copied to members, were confirmed as being a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH ASSEMBLY MEETING HELD ON 12th MAY 2025.

Noted that parking at the Fryer Rd junction with Manchester Road remains an issue.

4. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Clerk presented the Annual Report of the Parish Council. A copy of the report, outlining the work of the Parish Council over the past 12 months, can be found at the end of these minutes as Appendix 1.

5. ANNUAL REPORT OF LOSTOCK GRALAM COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Annual Report of the Lostock Gralam Community Centre was received. A copy of the report, outlining the work of the Community Centre over the past 12 months, can be found at the end of these minutes as Appendix 2.

6. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ST. JOHNS CHURCH

The Annual Report of St. John's Church was received. A copy of the report, outlining the work of the Church and its financial position, can be found at the end of these minutes as Appendix 3.

7. OBSERVATIONS OF THE CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCILLORS FOR THE PARISH

Verbal report summary – Cllr M Stocks

- The condition of the highway network continues to be a concern, including potholes and gullies not being maintained.
- The Townshend Road S106 project appears to be progressing.
- The proposed housing development on the field off Manchester Road has gone quiet. Part of the field remains earmarked for HS2.
- Ongoing concerns remain regarding a site off Moss Lane; however, there is little Cheshire West and Chester Council can do. The stone bridge at Lostock Hollow has been inspected and is considered safe.
- Cheshire West and Chester Council is currently in Purdah following the passing of a Councillor.
- Cheshire West and Chester Council is due to discuss Peak Cluster and HyNet.
- The route for HS2 continues to be safeguarded.
- The “Report It” app is no longer in use and has been replaced with a website version.
- The Council is overpaying for some services.

Cllr Litton asked CWAC Cllr Stocks about devolution.

8. QUESTIONS TO THE PARISH COUNCIL

None

There being no further business, the Parish Assembly meeting closed at 7.50 p.m.

Appendix 1 APA-

ANNUAL REPORT OF LOSTOCK GRALAM PARISH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR 2025–26 THE COUNCIL

Councillor Mark Venables has served as Chairman for the past twelve months, with Councillor Mark Litton as Vice Chairman. The Parish Council has successfully maintained full membership, with all ten seats filled throughout the year.

It has been an active and productive year for the Council. Members jointly hosted a successful community Christmas event at the Slow and Easy, raising funds for local projects through a well-supported Christmas raffle. The Council also delivered a “Talking Bench” project in partnership with the Community Centre, providing a valuable space to support social connection and wellbeing.

In addition, the Council has continued its commitment to Remembrance, organising lamp post poppy displays and maintaining a permanent silhouette tribute to commemorate those who have served. Ongoing efforts to enhance the local environment have also been sustained, with seasonal planting across the parish, including planters and bulbs.

CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL

Councillor Stocks has regularly attended Parish Council meetings and remained in contact with both the Council and the Clerk throughout the year. He has continued to support the Parish Council by awarding grants for the Christmas light switch-on event and Lostock in Bloom.

PLAY AREA

The play area remains well maintained, with councillors undertaking regular litter picking and bin emptying. Lawtons have effectively maintained the grassed areas, with their three-year contract having commenced in April 2025.

Some items within the play area require cleaning and repainting; this ongoing work is being managed by Parish Councillors. The Council has also undertaken minor maintenance tasks and commissioned professional contractors to replace entrance gate mechanisms on three gates.

HIGHWAYS

The Highways Section 106 project at Townshend Road remains disappointingly stalled, despite ongoing efforts by the Clerk to obtain updates.

More generally, road surfaces, gullies, and manholes are not being maintained to a satisfactory standard. While some patching work has taken place, the overall condition of the roads continues to decline. Station Road, in particular, experienced a prolonged sunken section which was only repaired once it deteriorated into an open hole. The Clerk continues to report faults regularly to Cheshire West and Chester Council Highways.

POLICING

Phil Hambleton continues in his role as PCSO for Shakerley, although his area of responsibility has increased significantly following a reorganisation and reduction in PCSO numbers.

CHURCHYARD

The Parish Council has continued its support of St John’s Church by providing a churchyard waste bin and awarding a maintenance grant. The Church is, however, facing increasing financial pressures, with available funds becoming more limited.

PLANNING

The LSEP project is entering its testing phase, with the site expected to be operational by the end of the year.

WS Storage has gained planning permission on appeal. A development of 14 homes on land adjacent to the Slow and Easy has also been approved. A self-storage container site at the overflow car park on Cheshire Avenue was refused planning permission and has submitted an appeal. The ground has been prepared for six apartments adjacent to Lostock Lodge Care home, an extension to the care homes carpark has been completed.

COMMUNITY LIAISON MEETINGS

The Parish Council continues to be represented at liaison meetings with the biogas plant (formerly an Ørsted site), LSEP, and Manchester Airport. These meetings provide opportunities to discuss and comment on business plans and operational activities.

MEMBERSHIP OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS

For 2025/26 the Parish Council has been a member of the Mid-Cheshire Rail Users Association, the Mid Cheshire Footpath Society, and the Cheshire Association of Local Councils.

A number of Parish Councillors are also involved with the Friends of Lostock Gralam Train Station. This group has made a significant contribution to improving the station's appearance, including repainting railings and walls, planting flowers, tidying the area, and helping to maintain a welcoming environment for passengers. We also have a Parish Councillor who is a member of the St Johns Church PCC and another Councillor who is on the Lostock Gralam Community Centre committee

Parish Council APA Update 11/05/26

Opening Thanks

Before beginning the update, I want to take a moment to thank everyone who has contributed to the running of the Community Centre over the past year. My sincere thanks go to our Trustees for their continued commitment, to our volunteers who give their time so generously, and to our domestic team who keep the building clean and welcoming. I would also like to thank our business users and customers for choosing to use the Centre and for supporting us throughout the year. Finally, we extend our thanks to the Parish Council for their ongoing support and partnership. The Centre relies on the combined efforts of all these people, and we are extremely grateful for everything they do.

Hall Usage

The hall continues to be available for private parties, meetings, events, and community activities. We welcome enquiries for both one-off events and regular bookings.

We now have a minimum of 300 users per week, taking part in a wide range of activities.

New hires this month include:

- Auction valuations / An ear-wax clinic / Pregnancy wellbeing sessions

Existing regular hires include:

- Yoga and Stretch classes
- Theatre rehearsals and Band practice
- A friendly society and Children's groups

In addition we have hosted 13 private parties.

So... what have we done since last year?

(Warning: some of this may not be glamorous, but it is important!)

Hire Agreements and Booking Processes

Business Users

We have introduced a more robust Hire Agreement for regular and business users. This strengthens how the Community Centre operates by setting clear rules, improving legal protection, and ensuring stronger safety compliance. It also gives hirers greater confidence, predictability, and professionalism.

Members of the Public

We have upgraded the online Private Party Booking Form. This has made the booking process safer, more consistent, and much easier to administer. The form captures all essential information upfront and ensures hirers understand their responsibilities before a booking is confirmed, with a particular focus on fire-safety requirements.

Data Protection

We have also registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), as we handle booking information and hirer contact details. This ensures we meet our legal obligations under data-protection law.

Building Safety Improvements

Over the past year, the Trustees have carried out a significant programme of safety improvements to ensure the Community Centre remains a safe, compliant, and well-managed facility. These upgrades strengthen our legal responsibilities as a charity and demonstrate our commitment to maintaining the building to a high standard.

Completed improvements include:

- A full Fire Risk Assessment
- Remedial works identified through the Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)
- Clearing the loft space to reduce fire load
- Installation of carbon monoxide alarms
- Repairing the CCTV system
- Repairing the car park lighting
- A visit from Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service's Business Safety Team, with their advice incorporated into our safety procedures

Where We Need Help

To keep the Community Centre running smoothly, we are seeking additional volunteers to support with:

- Opening and closing for events and parties
- Admin and social media
- Simple DIY and maintenance tasks
- Assistance with the Family Fun Day on 5th September
- Donations of raffle prizes for the Fun Day
- Support with researching and preparing grant applications, which are increasingly important for funding improvements and future projects

Looking Ahead

As we look to the year ahead, our aim is to build on the progress made in previous years and continue strengthening the Centre for the benefit of the whole community. With the support of our Trustees, volunteers, business users, customers, and the Parish Council, we remain committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and well-run space that serves local people and supports a wide range of activities. Together, we can ensure the Community Centre continues to thrive and grow.

Appendix 3 APA-

The Parish of St John the Evangelist Lostock Gralam



May 11th – Report to Lostock Gralam Parish Council

- Currently we are in a Parish Vacancy. This is in its initial stages. The Parish Profile has only just been submitted to Chester Diocese at Church House, and they will then start the process of advertising the post. This will eventually lead to a short-listing of candidates and a day set for interview. This could be some time in the future as, personally, I think it will be hard to find a person willing to take on a part-time role. There is also the problem of accommodation for them as The Vicarage is leased to Tiny Tots.
- This will be for a part-time post as the Parish cannot afford a full-time priest – probably a Sunday and two days. This is because the parish church does not have the financial income to pay the full Parish Share. Every Parish pays a Parish Share to Chester Diocese. Say the average full Parish Share is £55K: based on socio-demographics a wealthy Parish may be expected to pay £70K, a poorer Parish with issues related to social deprivation might be expected to pay £40. Lostock Gralam is a Parish regarded as being above average so (based on these imaginary figures) might be expected to pay £60K. This is currently beyond us – and has been since Revd Barbara Sharp left (2011).
- How is Lostock Gralam Parish funded? The Church receives no direct funding from either Chester Diocese or from The Church Commissioners. Property and Shares investments held by the Church Commissioners appear to make The Church of England wealthy, but the interest generated by the investments is what finances the Church of England – so without the investments or shares, there would no income to sustain the work of the Church. The money is allocated for the administration of the Church, and some Dioceses receive grants to support their work. As far as I am aware Chester Diocese is not in receipt of direct allocated support.
- Lostock Parish receipts come from the following sources:
 - a). Regular Giving whether on the plate, by direct debit, through a covenant system or gift aid. In 2025 – approx. £26K. Average Church attendance is 28 people although there are 52 folks on the electoral roll (40% non-resident)
 - b). Fees – for funerals etc. In 2025 approx. £6K.
 - c). Fund-raising. In 2025 approx. £7K. Last year our total receipts were £45.8K and our expenditure £37.3K – a good year. In the previous year we only just broke even.
- Currently we should pay a Parish share of £2K per month - £24 per annum – but can only afford a percentage of this.
- Other expenditure includes Insurance - £1.5K. Utilities – approx. £4K for electricity, gas and water. Churchyard maintenance approx. £10.5K. Routine maintenance. Lightning Conductor inspection and identified work this year cost about £1.4K.
- Taking the above figures into account, it is worth remembering that the church therefore exists on the back of the commitment, and the regular giving, of a very small number of people.
- A note on Parish Fees which are set by the Church of England: Fees for weddings, funerals, burials/burial of ashes are split between the Diocese and the Parish. e.g. A service at a crematorium only costs £244 of

which the Diocese receive £207 and the Parish £37. A burial of ashes fee is £206 of which the Diocese receive £54 and the Parish £152.

- I felt it was necessary to explain this as I have spoken to many who folk who have little or no idea about how their local church is funded and indeed believe that it is funded centrally. I thought this need clarification.
- Thank you for providing the opportunity to share this information. Hopefully it will illustrate the issues the Parish faces when appointing a new priest.

Graham Sheen – Parish Reader.