

Great Ponton Village Centre Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Date: Thursday 9 October 2025

Location: Great Ponton Village Centre

Present

Chris Lord (Chairman), Paul A Lashmar (Treasurer), Susan Shaw (Secretary), Megan Parker (Events and Media), Paul J Lashmar (Bar Manager), Ian Cruickshank (Holding Trustee), Carol Ramsey (Custodian Trustee)

Several villagers were in attendance. Public notices inviting attendance had been displayed for four weeks prior to the AGM.

Apologies

Chantel sent apologies.

Chair's Welcome

Chris welcomed everyone and spoke about the importance of the Village Centre as a place for the community to come together for social, educational, business and group activities. He thanked the committee, volunteers and residents for their continued support.

Chris announced the resignation of Fred Furbar from the committee and thanked him for his years of exceptional service and tireless effort. The whole committee acknowledged and warmly thanked Fred for his valued contribution. Chris also thanked the entire committee for their dedication, with particular thanks to Paul A and Paul J for ensuring the smooth running of the Centre. The committee agreed. Chris then handed over to the Treasurer.

Treasurer's Report

Paul A outlined the governance structure as detailed in the Charity document. The committee members are also Charity Trustees and are required to resign annually at the AGM and may stand for re-election along with any other interested parties. Amendments to the document are required as there is no longer representation from the Council, Police or similar bodies, and it is unlikely such representatives can be recruited.

Paul explained that Custodian Trustees (Carol Ramsey) and Holding Trustees (Ian Cruickshank) are not required to resign annually and are not elected positions.

Centre Funds

Paul addressed rumours suggesting that trust money had been moved without consent. This was confirmed to be untrue. The trust fund of £6,450 is reserved for emergencies and essential unforeseen works. The committee agreed the money should be held separately from the main account. An account was opened and the funds deposited; however, as this account incurs monthly charges, an alternative account is being sought. The funds are secure, accounted for and remain in the bank.

A villager reminded the meeting that during historic flooding repairs, funds were used and later repaid once insurance claims were settled, demonstrating the purpose of this reserve. Carol confirmed she had visited the bank and suggested that bank representatives could attend to explain account matters to villagers.

Matters Arising

Paul A addressed the query from the previous meeting regarding missing funds between 2018–2022. Carol has spent considerable time over the past 7–8 months attempting to reconcile records; however, due to poor historical record-keeping, the police advised there is insufficient evidence to support a prosecution. The police have retained the information, are aware of the individuals involved, and have issued a crime number. Carol has requested written confirmation that no further action will be taken and will follow this up.

Financial Report

Paul A presented copies of the annual financial report for the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025. Copies are available for inspection and will be published on the GPVH website. Although the accounts show a loss, this reflects a 50% reduction in hall bookings due to circumstances beyond the committee's control, along with over £3,000 spent addressing overdue health and safety compliance and essential repairs, including fire alarm servicing, emergency lighting, electrical safety checks, PAT testing and replacement of a faulty fridge.

Paul explained that had these issues been addressed in prior years, the Centre would have shown a healthy profit. Bookings and bar takings have since improved, and the Centre's current bank balance stands at £5,420, providing a stronger position going forward. Cost-saving measures have been implemented, including a reduction in card payment charges, improved energy management, and identification of cheaper energy and Wi-Fi contracts once existing contracts end.

Cheque signatories are currently limited to Ian and Carol. The new Chair and Treasurer will be added as signatories as soon as possible to improve access if required. Paul thanked Carol for her support with the finances, and Ian endorsed this thanks.

Questions from the Floor

A villager asked how much money a charity is allowed to hold. Paul explained that income over £25,000 must be distributed to other charities, chosen collectively.

A question was raised regarding bingo hall hire charges. Paul explained that this matter had previously been debated by the committee and, following a vote, it was agreed that hire charges should apply. The issue will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting to allow further discussion with the new committee and public forum.

Chair's Address

Chris reflected on recent changes within the committee and noted that over the past six months there has been increased stability and a rise in events. He expressed hope that this momentum would continue with the new committee. Paul confirmed that transparency is now in place, with minutes and accounts available on the website. Chris also discussed collaboration with the Parish Council.

Events

Megan outlined upcoming events including a 70s Night, Fire-ween, New Year's Eve Party, Dolly Parton tribute and a singer in February. Fire-ween and the 70s Night will have free entry.

A villager raised concerns about insufficient turnaround time between bookings. This was acknowledged as an oversight and will be considered for future bookings.

Resignations and Appointments

The committee formally resigned. The Chair invited expressions of interest from the public to join the committee; none were received. Existing members agreed to continue and were re-elected by those present. Paul A stepped down from the Vice Chair role due to a potential conflict of interest, and Megan Parker was appointed Vice Chair.

Any Other Business

Paul J reported strong future bookings, including training sessions. Barbara noted bingo as an effective way to promote the Centre. Chris provided an update on the play area, including discussions with Wicksteed regarding low-maintenance equipment and potential grant funding. Fundraising will commence once plans and costs are confirmed. Susan asked whether a broken bench could be burned at the Fire-ween bonfire.

Close of Meeting

The new Chair thanked everyone for attending.

Next Meeting

Thursday 6 November 2025, 7.00pm

Agreed:

..... Date

And:

..... Date