

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE
held on 3 May 2001 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs M Anderson
Councillor Mrs B Bell
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
Mr C McIlwrick (Co-opted)
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor A Warrington (in the Chair)

Councillor RA Storrar (Invited Member)

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs D Whitton.

17 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 February 2001 be confirmed as a correct record.

18 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

19 GRASSED AMENITY AREAS – “NO BALL GAMES”
IN PURSUIT OF A BYELAW

Councillor Mrs JE Storrar reported that she had been in contact with Clive Roberts of Chester City Council’s Sports and Recreation Section concerning the proposed Byelaw. He had informed her that the City Council Officer’s overriding view was that a Byelaw for the grassed amenity areas in Saughall would not be an effective solution and it would be better to adjust the length of the grass cutting and look at further planting to deter ball games while maintaining an amenity for the under 10s. Duncan Henderson of Chester City Council had experience of managing problems on such areas and would be happy to advise the Parish Council on finding a solution. Mr Roberts had gone on to inform that with other areas in Chester he has found the problem to go in cycles as children grow up and move onto other activities.

The Clerk reported that Mr John Richardson of the City Council’s Legal Service had not responded to her letter dated 28 January 2001 requesting that he take appropriate action to obtain a Byelaw preventing ball games on the village’s grassed amenity areas.

Members were not opposed to young local children playing on the grassed amenity areas. It was older children from other parts of the village that were causing the problems.

It was agreed that a double approach to the problem was necessary i.e. To pursue the Byelaw and appropriate planting to deter ball games.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Councillor Mrs JE Storrar be requested to pursue the Byelaw with Chester City Council Officers;
- (2) the Clerk be requested to write again to Mr John Richardson requesting that he reply to her letter asking him to take appropriate action; and
- (3) the Clerk be requested to write to Mr Duncan Henderson asking for ideas on a proposed planting scheme for the grassed amenity areas to be implemented in the Autumn.

20 CRIME AND DISORDER AUDIT

Mr McIlwrick reported that he had received a copy of the results of the Parish Appraisal carried out by the Cheshire Community Council for the Parish Council in 1998. He had asked subsequently for a copy of the questionnaire used at the time so he could compare the questions asked to the final conclusions reached.

Mr McIlwrick's initial thoughts, having seen the results of the survey, were that it would not be advantageous to carry out a further survey on a similar scale. He suggested that the Homewatch could conduct a short survey, only on crime and disorder elements.

It was noted that the Parish Council had invited Mrs Vivien Ellis, Principal Officer at the Chester Community Council, to attend the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 24 May 2001 in order to offer the Council help in the production of a Community Plan. The Rural White Paper had informed that the Government wanted all parishes in the Country to produce a Community Plan. Funding had been set aside and the Chairman was hopeful that the Council might be able to access some of it.

The Committee also considered substance abuse in the village and considered arranging a presentation on it and its effects etc. and inviting all interested parties to attend.

It was noted that the Chester Drugs Action Team would provide useful contacts and Councillor Storrar would provide a contact from Live Education who also had expertise in this field.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Mr McIlwrick's offer that the Homewatch conduct a short survey on crime and disorder in the village be welcomed and pursued further with Mrs Ellis of the Chester Community Council at the next meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee;
- (2) the Committee discuss the proposal at (1) above further at its next meeting when Mr McIlwrick would be in receipt of a copy of the questionnaire; and
- (3) Mr McIlwrick be requested to pursue the proposal to arrange a presentation on drugs misuse etc. for interested people in the village.

14 CRIME AND DISORDER IN SAUGHALL
ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR CONTRACTS (ABCs)

(a) Letter from the Home Office Minister

Christine Russell MP had written to the Clerk and had enclosed the response she had received from the Home Office Minister, Charles Clarke MP.

Mr Clarke was sorry that the Juvenile Offenders Unit had taken so long to reply to the Clerk's letter. He agreed that it was unacceptable to wait six and a half months for a response. The Juvenile Offenders Unit was normally expected to respond to letters from the public within 10 days. It received a huge volume of correspondence and a backlog had built up due to staff changes.

Mr Clarke was also sorry that the Clerk felt the response eventually received did not address the points raised. He informed that the Juvenile Offenders Unit was not at that time aware of the Islington Scheme which was a local initiative.

Mr Clarke went on to inform that the Acceptable Behaviour Contract was one of a raft of measures spawned from the Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) which the Government introduced on 1 April 1999. ASBOs were introduced to target activities which disrupted the lives of individuals, families or communities. ASBOs were an important addition to the range of responses available to tackle anti-social behaviour.

The police or local authority could apply for an ASBO to deal with those aged 10 and above causing harassment, alarm or distress to their neighbourhood. They were Civil Orders akin to an injunction, which prohibited the anti-social behaviour and may include other provisions such as barring the subject of the Order from specified places at certain times. Breach of the Order was a criminal offence that carried a maximum term of five years' imprisonment. The Home Office has strongly encouraged local agencies to consider the use of these powers in tackling local

problems of crime and disorder. They were now genuinely making a difference as a key tool in an overall anti-social behaviour strategy which includes the youth justice reforms referred to in the letter sent by the Juvenile Offenders Unit.

Islington Council developed the Anti-Social Behaviour Contract as a way of tackling anti-social behaviour conducted by juveniles without recourse to the Courts. These were not a replacement for ASBOs but could be a useful alternative where the behaviour of the individual concerned was not sufficiently serious as to warrant an ASBO. Targeted effectively, ABCs, as they have become known, could educate children and their parents to take responsibility and ownership of their unacceptable behaviour by making them sign a document in which they agreed not to behave in an unacceptable way.

ABCs were quick, flexible and cheap – use of them complemented the evidence gathering process required in order to seek an ASBO. Islington Council was committed to using ASBOs against those who continually breach their Contract.

This scheme had generated an interest from over 90 different parts of England, Scotland and Wales.

Mr Clarke referred to the Council's view that young offenders should be named in the Press in an effort to deter their offending. He reminded the Council that the media was free to attend the Youth Courts and to report the cases, but there were restrictions on the way in which cases were reported to preclude the identification of young people involved. These restrictions were set out in Section 49 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 which prohibited the publication of any report or picture which might reveal the young person's name, address or school.

The Court, however, had discretion to lift those restrictions in certain circumstances. One example was when it would be in the public interest to do so. The Government had been encouraging Courts to fully exercise their discretion and believed that the public interest consideration should include the need to prevent offending by the young person, so long as was consistent with the need to have regard to the welfare of that person. Other examples where lifting restrictions might be appropriate were where the offending was persistent or serious or had impacted on a large number of people.

Members agreed that Mr Clarke's letter was very helpful and that the challenge was to translate it into action. The message was that the Home Office was encouraging Courts to start naming juvenile offenders.

Mr McIlwrick considered that it would be possible, through the Homewatch, to provide evidence of those youths whose behaviour was consistently unacceptable.

It was also identified that it would be necessary to establish good working relationships with Chester City Council and the Cheshire Constabulary. Members felt that it was important that Inspector Martin Cleworth and PC Gareth Cooper, or their representatives, were in attendance at all future meetings of this Committee.

RESOLVED: That

(1) this Committee be requested to meet 3 times per year at the end of August/beginning of September, January and May (dates to be determined at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 21 May 2001); and

(2) Inspector Cleworth and PC Cooper be invited to attend all future meetings.

(b) Acceptable Behaviour Contracts – Partnership Working

Members considered the guidance on the use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders prepared by the Metropolitan Police and Islington Borough Council in partnership to reduce crime in Islington.

It was agreed that both the Parish Council and the local Homewatch would like to see a similar initiative operating in the Chester District.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the Clerk be requested to write to Mr Paul Durham, Chief Executive of Chester City Council, and Inspector Cleworth informing them that the Parish Council and the Homewatch, jointly, would like an early meeting with both of them (and asking them to liaise with each other and supply some possible dates) to discuss ABCs and how we can all work in partnership to tackle anti-social behaviour.

(2) on receipt of proposed dates the Clerk be requested to call a Special Meeting of the Committee; and

(3) Sergeant Tim Roberts (Blacon) be invited to attend the Special Meeting.

(c) Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils

It was reported that Mrs Jackie Weaver, the Secretary of the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils, had written to the Clerk to relay progress made following the two motions put forward by the Parish Council at the Association's Annual General Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the details supplied by Mrs Weaver be provided for the next meeting of the Parish Council scheduled for 21 May 2001.

22 CONSIGNIA

Councillor RA Storrar informed the meeting that it might be possible for the Homewatch to secure funding from Consignia for security measures e.g. A patrols pilot.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor RA Storrar be requested to provide Mr McIlwrick with the names and addresses of two Consignia contacts.