

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK  
PARISH COUNCIL held on 22 April 2002 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs M Anderson  
Councillor Mrs B Bell  
Councillor H Dobson  
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey  
Councillor B Kerr (in the Chair)  
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar  
Councillor RA Storrar  
Councillor G Southey  
Councillor A Warrington  
Councillor Mrs J Young

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Councillor A Bailey  
Councillor SS Evans  
Councillor Mrs D Whitton

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 23 April 2001 be confirmed as a correct record.

3 CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman welcomed parishioners to their Annual Assembly and then presented his annual report setting out the Council's achievements over the past year, the detail of ongoing initiatives and aims and aspirations for the future.

Various issues were highlighted and considered in detail, these included:

(a) Sports and Recreation

For some years the Parish Council had been discussing with Cheshire County Council the possible purchase of land to the North of Lodge Lane in its ownership for recreational purposes. During the course of discussions a number of things had happened:

?? Shotwick House (including the Old Coach Road) was sold.

This was despite there being an undertaking not to do so as it gave access to the land the Parish Council had been interested in.

?? The Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School acquired the land behind its building.

This effectively landlocked the land the Council was interested in.

- ?? Shotwick House was developed into luxury apartments. Gates were installed in the wrong place. Their present location created potential problems of access to the land the Council had been interested in.
- ?? The meadow land had a large dip and it was discovered that to level and bring it up to the required standard for recreational purposes involved a lot of work and would be costly.
- ?? Cheshire County Council requested a business plan. This could not be provided as the Council did not know how much earth needed to be moved. Eventually, the County Council agreed to pay for a survey. This was carried out and showed a 2 metre drop in the level of the field.
- ?? Recently a piece of land on Fiddlers Lane was put up for sale on the open market. It was to be disposed of by public auction. Strategically, it made sense for the Council to acquire the land. It had road frontage and access to all mains services. It also adjoined land already in the Council's ownership.
- ?? Unanimous agreement was reached at the Parish Council meeting on 8 April 2002 to attempt to acquire the land on Fiddlers Lane, Saughall. An offer of £27,000 was made and accepted and the land was withdrawn from auction. Completion of the purchase was expected to be on 17 May 2002.

The Council would now be able to move forward with its plans for recreational facilities within the Parish boundaries.

The Vernon Institute did own recreational land just over the border in Wales. However, there were problems in attracting grant aid. English funders would not give grants for Welsh land whilst Welsh funders would not assist and English Parish Council.

The purchase of the new land created many opportunities for the Parish Council and the various sporting organisations in the village who would be able to secure funding in their own right. Therefore, the land's development would not put an undue burden on the parish precept.

#### (b) Street Cleaning & Grounds Maintenance

Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council had been awarded a 4 year contract to litter pick the village and for grounds maintenance of the Fiddlers Lane Playing Field. Chester City Council had been invited to tender for the work but it had come in too high.

Street Cleansing work would cost £8,060 + VAT per annum whilst grounds maintenance would cost £2,360 + VAT for the period 1 April to 31 October each year. Agreement had also been reached that additional work would be undertaken following agreement on a fair rate.

Effectively, these negotiations meant that a nil inflation contract had been secured for the next 4 years.

If parishioners noted any litter problems in particular areas of the village they were invited to contact the Clerk who would arrange for delittering to take place.

(c) Traffic Issues

The Council had been campaigning for some time for action to alleviate congestion at the junction of the A540 and A5117.

All intersections from the end of the M53 Motorway to the Welsh Border were programmed for improvement in approximately 7 years time.

The Council had pressed the Department of Transport to put in some temporary traffic lights and been assured that it would be done. However, there was no funding for this scheme in the current financial year. The earliest they would be in place was 2003/2004.

(d) Deeside Industrial Park

The Welsh Development Agency and Flintshire County Council had wanted to extend the Park. Puddington and District Parish Council, Burton Residents Association and villagers on the effected part of the Wirral peninsula who overlooked the proposed development were worried about the effect on their quality of life. Large buildings would dominate the landscape. The Council had also been concerned because of the traffic congestion that would result.

The Welsh Assembly turned down the application and Flintshire County Council and the Welsh Development Agency appealed. A Public Inquiry was held. Neither Cheshire County Council nor Chester City Council were going to make representations at the Inquiry.

Puddington & District Parish Council took the lead and engaged a barrister to make representations. The Council agreed to contribute £1,000 to the total cost.

The Inspector turned down the appeal primarily because the intended site was on grade 2 agricultural land and also there were a number of brown field sites in Flintshire.

(e) Crime Prevention

At every Parish Council meeting there have been reports from the Homewatch Co-ordinator and from the Police. Saughall did have problems but they must be kept in perspective. The main complaint was with nuisance youths and vandalism.

It was important for the Council to continue to monitor the situation and to have a presence at Police Forum meetings to get its points across.

(f) Voluntary Organisations

The Council's role was to pump prime and facilitate voluntary organisations.

The closure the Youth Club/Drop-in Centre had been a concern. There had also been difficulties experienced in trying to open it up again.

The Parish Council wanted to help but did respect the concerns of the Vernon Institute Management Committee whose premises was used by the Youth Club.

There had been a lot of activity and some hard work put in by a number of people. Consequently, the Youth Club would be re-opening its doors, initially for one night a week. Opening may be extended depending on the young people. They had a responsibility too. If there were problems the Club would close again.

The Chairman paid tribute to Councillors Warrington and RA Storrar who had worked hard on this initiative.

(g) Retail Premises

The Chairman announced with regret that the Winery had closed. The Council would do all in its power to support local shops and businesses. All villagers were encouraged to use village shops or lose them.

(h) Public Transport

Saughall enjoyed a good bus service provided by Chester City Transport. The re-routing of the No 28 bus service had caused concerns. It was difficult for parishioners to get to Kwik Save and the new B&Q. Councillor RA Storrar was in discussion with the Managing Director of Chester City Transport and hoped that the route could be revised.

The Parish Council had not been consulted on the route change. The re-routing had occurred to meet the needs of a pressure group in Blacon. It had been remiss of the bus company not to consult the Parish Council and this point had been well made. Hopefully, in the future consultation would take place and the Council would be able to feed in comments.

(i) Street Lighting

The Council had identified three areas in the village where lighting could be improved. The County Council's Street Lighting Section had provided quotations but they were too high. Members had decided, with regret, not to pursue these projects for the time being. Consequently, no budgetary provision had been made.

(j) Your Views

The Council was keen for its electorate to feed in its views. It wanted to engage with the local community it served. Consequently, ten minutes of public speaking time was set aside at the beginning of each Council meeting for this purpose. Also, Members took it in turn to be on duty at Parish Council Surgeries held between 10:00am and 10:45am on Saturdays in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall.

Parish Newsletters continued to be issued twice a year to keep villagers up to date with the Council's activities.

The Council was also the proud owner of a website that was in its infancy and evolving:

Residents were encouraged to visit the site and put forward suggestions to bring about improvement.

#### 4 QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The following issues were raised by members of the public. The Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee would have due regard for each of them at its meeting scheduled for 23 May 2002.

- (1) Traffic Calming - Difficulties are being experienced by residents who live on Hermitage Road and on Church Lane (opposite the school). Speeding traffic is a hazard not only to pedestrians but also to other motorists. Although it was accepted that parked cars do slow the traffic down there are not many of these in some parts of the village. Some villagers experienced difficulties trying to get off their drives.

It was suggested that the Council review traffic calming in the village. Traffic Calming schemes in Blacon and Upton were cited as good practice.

- (2) No Parking - It was suggested that the Council consider whether or not yellow lines should be put down on the road outside the Doctors' Surgery.
- (3) Long Lane Junction – It was suggested that the safety aspect could be improved if the view to the right was improved. The hedge and electricity pylon obstructed the view.
- (4) Litter – It was suggested that the Council should be more proactive and work with the Schools in an attempt to find ways to help educate school children not to drop litter.
- (5) Street Cleaning - It was suggested that the Council ought to find out if pavements were still being swept twice in the year (Spring and Autumn) by the Principal Authority.
- (6) New Community Centre - Representations were made over the need for a new purpose built building in the village for community use. This would be considered and consulted upon before the Parish Plan was drawn up.
- (7) Vernon Institute - Concerns were raised over the current state of the Vernon Institute building. It was considered that it looked old, tired and in need of refurbishment. Without modernisation it may be at the end of its life.
- (8) Terminus Bus Stop – Villagers, who were bus users, wished to see a bus shelter at the bus terminus whilst those who lived in its immediate vicinity did not. It was suggested that the Council's recent land acquisition might mean that youths would congregate elsewhere in the future and that it might be possible to revisit this issue at a later date.

#### 5 PARISH PLAN

The Chairman informed parishioners that a decision had been taken to seek a £5,000 grant from the Countryside Agency to compile a Parish Plan.

In the Rural White Paper – “Our Countryside: the future”, the Government had set out its agenda for the countryside. A countryside facing change. But change set into a context of reform, not only in how it governed, but also how it planned. The compilation of a Parish Plan was an important step in helping local rural communities to take charge of their own destinies and also an opportunity to strengthen the first, and most local, form of government in this country.

A Parish Plan could provide a blueprint for the future survival of rural communities. They were able to influence local strategic partnerships and the preparation of community strategies, and now there was a new opportunity for Parish Plans to form part of the bedrock of the new local development frameworks that would be prepared by every local planning authority to replace existing local plans.

Parishioners were offered the opportunity to inform the Council about what people needed locally, what services the community valued and why and who were not getting their fair share of support or even having their voices heard.

The Plan would consider every aspect of village life and guide the Parish Council for the next ten years.

The Chairman then asked those in attendance to speak out on what they would like to see included in the Saughall Parish Plan.

Issues raised included the following:

- ?? Provision of a new modern community facility – attractive, appealing, well used, convenient, well positioned and preferable licensed.
- ?? Appropriate improvements to be made to the Vernon Institute. It is central and can be licensed when required.
- ?? It is important to explore whether there is a need for the Vernon Institute building in the future.
- ?? Could a new community facility and the Vernon Institute building complement each other?
- ?? Uniform Group Headquarters should have its planning conditions varied so greater use can be made of it.
- ?? Problems of transient society, the “dormitory village” effect needs to be addressed and community spirit encouraged.
- ?? Affordable housing should be provided in Saughall to meet local need.
- ?? Traffic calming measures should be extended.
- ?? The village should be made more attractive and be encouraged by entering the Best Kept Village/Community Pride Competition run by the Cheshire Community Council each year.
- ?? Improved Policing to combat crime and alleviate people’s perceptions and fears of crime and anti-social behaviour. Consideration should be given to such initiatives as CCTV and Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme,