

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH
COUNCIL held on 3 February 2003 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs M Anderson
Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)
Councillor CW Eyton
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
Councillor Mrs J Johnson
Councillor B Kerr
Councillor A Marsden
Councillor R Shukla
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor Mrs D Whitton
Councillor Mrs J Young

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Councillor C Moss
Mr B Jones (Acting Homewatch Co-ordinator)
PC G Cooper

26 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

Councillor Shukla, as a resident of Saughall, set out his concerns over a recent report published by the Office of Fair Trading. Proposals threatened the destabilisation of the Pharmacy sector and it was thought that these had been reached based purely in terms of commercial value and that distances and quality had not been considered. Councillor Shukla informed that as the village Pharmacist he would be protected in theory as there would be subsidies available if the proposals were implemented but such action could trigger detriment to pharmacies and health care in general.

Once pharmacies were established in supermarkets it would be difficult for smaller ones to operate on a commercial basis as they would be in danger of being undercut. The elderly, those without cars and the housebound in particular would be penalised.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Clerk be requested to write to Christine Russell MP setting out the Council's concerns if proposals set out in the report by the Office of Fair Trading were implemented;
- (2) individual Parish Councillors be encouraged to also write to their local MP;
- (3) residents of Saughall be encouraged to write to their local MP with their concerns over the proposals; and
- (4) the Clerk be requested to draft a letter to be used as a base for local residents submissions, if requested ((2) and (3) refers).

27 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Shukla, the village Pharmacist, who had made representations (Minute No 26/2003 refers) declared an Interest as he was a Pharmacist, in respect of the report by the Office of Fair Trading.

28 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 6 and 20 January 2003 be confirmed as a correct record.

29 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- meeting held on 6 January 2003

Minute No 9 - Highway Matters

(g) Parkgate Road – Road Resurfacing

It was reported that the District Engineer was sorry about the lack of consultation with the Council. He had thought that his Head Office was consulting whilst it thought that he was doing it.

The resurfacing work was now complete.

(h) Drainage Issues

Councillor Kerr agreed to discuss the drainage issues on Hermitage Road at the Peg and at the Red House, with the District Engineer when they held their site meetings.

Minute No 10 - Environment Matters

(b) Golden Jubilee Park

It was reported that Ringwood Fencing had begun the fencing work.

It had been agreed at the last meeting to take no action to dredge the pond at the current time as there were environmental concerns.

(f) Passageway – Lodge Lane

This was corrected to Fieldway.

- budget meeting held on 20 January 2003

At the meeting calculations were made to assist the determination of the budget and the precept. Unfortunately, there had been an error in the calculations which the Clerk had discovered after the meeting which meant that the precept would be up by 2% on last year.

To avoid this, as the Council wanted a –1% decrease, the £1,000 put into contingencies at the end of the meeting was taken out to ensure that there was no increase to next year's precept.

RESOLVED:

That the action taken by the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman be endorsed.

30 ACCOUNTS

(a) Payments made since the meeting of the Council held on 6 January 2003:

Financial Year 2002/2003	£	Cheque No
United Utilities	8.78	101570
STRI (soil testing)	233.00	101571
Chester City Council (Newsletter printing) *	267.96	101572
Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council (Street Cleaning & Grounds Maintenance)	2,370.70	101573
Mrs S Hudspeth (Salary including arrears to 1 April 2002)	556.76	101574
Mrs S Hudspeth (Expenses)	72.06	101575

* It was agreed that the Clerk would query the cost of printing the Newsletter as it appeared to have cost a lot more than the previous one. If the Invoice was correct it would be paid before the next meeting of the Council.

(b) Receipts

Interest to 24 January 2003 (Treasurer Account)	0.04
Interest to 21 January 2003 (14 day Interest Account)	47.19

(c) Audit of Accounts 2001/2002

It was noted that Hacker Young had not completed the annual audit. The Clerk had e-mailed them to ask when their work would be done and the accounts signed off. They had failed to respond.

RESOLVED:

That this matter be brought to the attention of the Secretary of the Association of Town and Parish Councils.

31 POLICE/HOMEWATCH

(a) Police

PC Gareth Cooper had sent his apologies as he was on night shift. He had reported however that he had patrolled the village frequently over the last month. There had been a burglary, some criminal damage and some sheds broken into. On the whole it was relatively quiet.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(b) Homewatch

The Acting Homewatch Co-ordinator, Mr Brian Jones, had sent his apologies for not being able to attend. He had supplied a written report.

The Homewatch had held its January 2003 meeting. Although it was short of Co-ordinators those who had attended had showed tremendous commitment to maintaining the village Homewatch and resolved to encourage villagers to report all incidents to the Police and to seek out new Co-ordinators.

January appeared to have seen a very low rate of incidents in the village but the major problem was that local people did not report matters to the Police. The only major incident had been in Greenway.

The new Homewatch Manager, Mr D Owens, had been in contact with Mr Jones and they hoped to meet up soon to discuss the wider issues of Homewatch in Saughall.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(c) Mrs Maureen McIlwrick

The sad death of the Homewatch Co-ordinator's wife, Mrs McIlwrick, was reported.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to send a sympathy card to Mr McIlwrick and his family.

(d) The Ridings Community Infant School

Councillor Mrs Whitton raised concerns over the traffic congestion at and around the Ridings School at the beginning and end of the school day. The congestion and numerous parked cars were presenting a danger to those who walked to and from school.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Rural Police Officer be asked to patrol the area at the times of the day when there was a build up of traffic; and
- (2) the Clerk be requested to write to Mrs J Davies, the Headteacher at the Ridings School, asking that she in turn write to parents in an attempt to alleviate the congestion problem.

(e) Crimebeat

The Clerk had received a Crimebeat pack. Crimebeat was a grant scheme run by the Police. It was targeted at youth groups and could provide them with up to £750 to support worthwhile community projects.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the Crimebeat pack be given to the Saughall Youth Club; and

(2) the Chairman be requested to ask the Rural Police Officer to provide some more packs for distribution around the other youth groups in the village.

32 HIGHWAY MATTERS

(a) Report of the District Engineer

Councillor Kerr had arranged to meet the District Engineer during the week to look at highway issues and he agreed to draw the District Engineer's attention to any problems reported.

?? There were a number of potholes in the village – one in Meadows Lane/Hermitage Road and two in Fiddlers Lane. Although they had been repaired, the repairs were not of a high enough standard.

?? The whole of Fiddlers Lane needed inspecting. The District Engineer had promised to resurface once funding was available. That had been two years or so ago. Since then the Lane had degenerated further and the work had still not been carried out.

?? The hedge on Hermitage Road from the Blacon Boundary to Stone Cottage/Wash Hall needed cutting as it was impossible for pedestrians to use the path. The Clerk had approached the responsible person by telephone previously but agreed to write this time and inform that if he didn't cut back the hedge was not cut back the District Engineer would do the work himself and send him the invoice.

?? Drainage problems on Hermitage Road (Minute No 29/2003 refers)

(b) Proposed Pelican Crossing - Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School

Miss Kay Hallas, Senior Technician, Traffic and Transportation, had written to the Clerk setting out the specifications for a 20mph speed limit. She informed that:

“The main factor in the criteria for a 20 mph speed limit to be introduced requires the speeds on the road to be in the region of 20 mph. If this is not the case already, it would be necessary to use physical measures such as traffic calming to reduce the speed down to this level.

It may be useful to know that the most recent speed readings carried out in Saughall showed the 85% to be 38 and 42 mph on the Northern and Southern sectors of Hermitage Road respectively, and 32 mph on Church Road outside the school.

All three sections of road were currently on the environmental traffic calming list. However, there are currently 86 sites throughout the Chester District which are also waiting to be assessed for the possible provision of traffic calming and these sites will have to be measured against all these other roads.

We are aiming to have all sites in the Chester District assessed by the end of this year. This will then give us a ranked list that will be put before the Local Joint Highway Committee for Chester for decision on which schemes to progress and how best to implement them.

Unfortunately, we are only usually allocated enough funding each year to progress one or two schemes, at best, dependant on size and cost of the measures implemented.”

RESOLVED:

That as Miss Hallas’ reasoning was a little confused, the Clerk be requested to ask her for further clarification.

- (c) The Cheshire County Council (A540 Chester High Road/Parkgate Road, Puddington, City of Chester)(De-Restriction) Order 2003

The Clerk, in support of Puddington and District Council, had written to Cheshire County Council’s Engineering Service objecting to the proposed De-Restriction Order for a 155 metre length of the A540. It was thought that if there were objections the speed De-restriction Order would then have to be considered by the County Council’s relevant committee.

However, the Clerk had been informed that the relevant Portfolio Holder had considered the objection and had approved the making of the Order as advertised and the De-Restriction Order would come into force on 24 January 2003, bringing the speed limit on this short length of the A540 into line with the adjacent lengths of dual carriageway.

RESOLVED:

That the situation be noted.

- (d) Birkenhead to Welsh Border – Route Management Strategy

The Clerk informed that she had a leaflet detailing the final M53/A55/A483/A550 Route Management Strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

- (e) Area 10 Trunk Road and Motorway Agency – A5117 Shotwick to M56 Carriageway Resurfacing

It was reported that work would commence on 31 January 2003 for 3 nights. Restrictions would be between 19:00 and 09:00 hours.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

- (f) Highway and Transportation Local Joint Committee for Chester – Thursday, 16 January 2003 at 6:30pm

RESOLVED:

That the content of the agenda be noted.

33 ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

- (a) Play Area Inspection - Fiddlers Lane Playing Field

It was noted that Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council had informed that the play equipment remained in good order.

The goalpost was still in the ditch and a report on its progress, or lack of it, would be brought to the next meeting.

Members also received a report on increased mole activity in the field and measures that could be introduced to alleviate the problem.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

- (b) Golden Jubilee Park

- (i) Report on Progress by Councillor B Kerr

It was reported that on the advice of Mr Ray Easby, the Cheshire Playing Fields Association's Technical Advisor, the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) had been commissioned to carry out soil testing on the Fiddlers Lane land and its findings were that the field was satisfactory. Because of the humus content the Council was advised to have a "motty test" carried out at a cost of £51.50.

There had been a meeting with one of the contractors on site, Mr Harris, and Mr Easby had also been in attendance. Mr Harris was a drainage expert but would contract out the more specialised work e.g. the cricket wicket, etc. His specification regarding the cricket wicket was not satisfactory because he had quoted for an artificial wicket but a grass wicket was required

Councillor Moss had met with Mr B Huxley of the Saughall Cricket Club and together they had pegged out a cricket square. He had also met with Mr K Evans and pegged out football pitches. Councillor Moss would now produce a detailed layout.

Councillor Moss had also agreed to contact Sport England to discuss funding opportunities, etc.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be received; and

(2) the Clerk be requested to arrange for the “motty test” to be carried out by STRI.

(ii) Planning Issues

Following a complaint made by the Clerk over the delay in processing the Council’s Planning Application and the negative and disappointing response that had eventually been given, the Planning Officer, Mr Mark Dickens, had written offering a site visit with himself and other relevant officers prior to the submission of a new planning application.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the offer of a meeting be accepted; and

(2) the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the Clerk be requested to attend the meeting.

(iii) Golden Jubilee Park Panel Agenda – 13 February 2003

RESOLVED:

That Grant Aid opportunities for the Cricket and Football Clubs be included on the agenda for discussion and progression.

(c) Parish Paths Warden’s Report

The Parish Paths Warden, Mr T Leach, submitted a report which listed a number of problems he had encountered whilst out walking the pathways of Saughall and Shotwick Park as follows:

- ?? Footpath SAU7 – the footbridge in second meadow behind the Greyhound was dislodged and dangerous.
- ?? Footpath SAU3 – fingerpost on roadside was broken and leaning against the hedge.
- ?? Footpath SAU13 at junction with M08 – planks were missing.
- ?? Kingswood Lane near Kennels – way almost impassable by heavy vehicles.
- ?? Kingswood Lane near Blacon end – a burnt out vehicle was blocking the way.
- ?? Junction SAU8/SAU11 – no footbridge across deep ditch.
- ?? Footpath SAU2 – Shotwick Lodge Farm – “Danger Beware of Bull” sign permanently displayed.
- ?? Footpath SAU12 – Pleasant View Farm – electric fences blocking the way.

It was noted that Mr Leach had reported these problems to Cheshire County Council’s Public Rights of Way Section

RESOLVED:

That Mr Leach be commended for his actions and his report.

(d) Grassed Amenity Area – Greenway

It was reported that nothing had been done to replace the bollards.

(e) Passageway – Fieldway

A letter dated 3 January 2003 had been received from the Housing Trust informing that it would consult with residents over the passageway.

(f) Complaint about Litter Picking on Private Property

The Clerk had received a complaint from a resident who was angry that the Council was paying for Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council's workmen to delitter the area in front of the Woodvale Stores. Tidying up and removal of rubbish was the responsibility of the proprietor.

Councillor Kerr reported that as the village was particularly untidy after Christmas, Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council had been asked to give special attention to some areas of the village including the Woodvale Stores because it needed it and had done an excellent job.

Members debated the matter at length noting that the land in front of the shop was used by the public and that it was a valuable community facility.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council be asked to delitter the area outside the Woodvale Stores only at times when it was deemed necessary; and
- (2) the Chairman be requested to write to all local businesses in Saughall informing them that the village was entered for the Best Kept Village Competition and asking them to keep their frontages tidy and litter free.

(g) Beeches Lane – Transformer

The Clerk reported that Mrs Pritchard of Scottish Power had reported that she had asked the Tree Co-ordinator to deal with the overhanging branches.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

(h) Telephone Box Vandalism

It was reported that the telephone box by the bus terminus had been vandalised again.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to inform British Telecom of the vandalism.

34 REVIEW OF PARISH CONSTITUTION

Concerns had been raised over the size of the electorate in Saughall and in Shotwick Park in relation to the number of Councillors representing them (12 in Saughall, 2 in Shotwick Park).

Chester City Council's Election Officer, Ms Christine Lawley, informing that her authority could increase/decrease the numbers within the parishes but could not create new Wards, change boundaries, etc. If the Parish Council could put a case forward for an increase/decrease and the reason why, Ms Lawley would report it to the Cabinet to see if it could be done.

Councillor Kerr reported that a District Council may conduct a review of the whole or any part of their area for the purpose of considering whether or not to make recommendations within subsection (2) of the regulations and (if they decide to do so) what recommendations.

Within the recommendations which the District Council could make following the review was the alteration of the area of a parish.

If the District Council made a recommendation for the alteration of the area of a parish which has a parish council, they may make recommendations for changes to the electoral arrangements for the Council.

If the District Council made any recommendation within subsection (2), it may include a recommendation for the related alteration of the boundaries of any electoral division of a County, or Ward of a district, within their area and any consequential alteration in the number of Councillors to be elected for the Ward.

RESOLVED:

That no further action be taken.

35 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

RESOLVED: That

(1) the Minutes of the following Committees and Panel meetings be received:

Planning Committee held on 6 and 20 January 2003
Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 16 January 2003
Community Safety Committee held on 8 January 2003

(2) Councillor Mrs Young be added to the list of those who attended the Community Safety Committee; and

(3) Mr Peter Hughes of Chester Security, Church Road, be invited to attend the next meeting of the Community and Safety Committee to be held on 7 May 2003, to discuss CCTV in Saughall.

36 STREET LIGHTING IN SAUGHALL

RESOLVED:

That consideration of this item be deferred.

37 PARISH PLAN

The Council noted the content of the application for funding submitted by the Clerk to the Countryside Agency at the end of January 2003.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the bid for funding be noted and the decision on funding be awaited.

38 PROPOSED AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Clerk reported that she had spoken personally to Ian Gould, the County Property Officer. He had told her quite categorically that he was not in negotiation to sell the land at Lodge Lane to the Arena Housing Association, with City Council Officers e.g. Charles Seward, acting as mediator. It was his duty to secure full market value for the land and he assured he would not sell for anything less.

Councillor Kerr had spoken to County Councillor Rowlands who had confirmed this.

In view of this the Council obviously had some concerns. It was known that it would be costly for Arena to carry out the work required and make the adaptations necessary on the land before it could be built upon. Therefore, the chances of them being able to buy at the price Mr Gould was willing to sell at was very small indeed. Mr Gould had told the Clerk that some sort of offer had come in from Arena, Mr Paul Manford, one of his officers, would be looking at it and if it was realistic he would be in touch. Mr Manford had not contacted the Clerk so it was presumed that the offer was too low yet again.

Mr Gould had visited the Parish Council's website, at the Clerk's request, and read the Minutes of the Rural Housing Working Group so he could see what the Parish Council had been led to believe by officers of both the City and Cheshire Community Councils. He professed himself to be amazed!

Mrs Amesbury of Chester City Council had been asked if she could shed any light on what was going on.

The Council agreed it would be necessary to look elsewhere for land on which to build affordable housing in Saughall.

RESOLVED:

That possibilities of sites that could be used for affordable housing be explored at the appropriate time.

39 PARISH COUNCIL SURGERIES

RESOLVED:

That the Parish Council's Surgeries rota for the next four weeks be as follows:

Date	Member
8 February 2003	Councillor CW Eyton/ Councillor Mrs M Anderson
15 February 2003	Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
22 February 2003	Councillor Mrs D Whitton
1 March 2003	Councillor Mrs JE Storrar

40 RURAL STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND
- TALKBACK, LOOK FORWARD ROADSHOW – THURSDAY, 16 JANUARY 2003

The Council received a report on the proceedings of a meeting attended by Councillor Mrs JE Storrar on the Code of Conduct. It was noted that one Parish Councillor in the Country had refused to sign up to the Code and declare his business interests. He had subsequently been barred from serving for 12 months following adjudication as the Adjudicator had said it was necessary to weigh up the consequences for him in declaring his interests in respect of his competitors etc. against the interests of his electorate. The interests of the electorate outweighed his own. Other cases were waiting to be heard.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

41 COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED

The following communications had been received:

- agenda for the Chester Rural North Local Panel Meeting – 7:00pm on Thursday, 6 February 2003 at Mollington, Backford and District Village Hall.

NOTED

- letter, undated, from Cheshire County Council's Client Manager, County Farms, Mr H Jones, along with feedback from the Consultation exercise re. Best Value Review of the County Farms Service.

NOTED

42 CIRCULARS RECEIVED

The following circulars had been received anyone who wanted a copy would contact the Clerk:

Cheshire County Council's Chester Matters – December 2002
Cheshire County Council's Trading Standards Newsletter – Issue No 1
ROSPA – Children's Playgrounds Annual Inspection 2003
Chester Volunteer Bureau's Volunteer Voice – Autumn and Winter 2002
The Cheshire County Playing Fields Association's Newsletter – The Playing Field

43 LOCAL PANEL MEETING – GOWEY – 7:00PM, WEDNESDAY, 29 JANUARY 2003 AT CHRISTLETON HIGH SCHOOL

Councillor Mrs M Anderson reported on the proceedings of the recent Local Panel meeting. She informed that the budget was expected to be in the region of £25,000 - £26,000 and there would be additional area budgets for community safety. It was possible that they would rollover from year to year. Arrangements were in hand to meet with Parish Councils and to hold road shows. Leaflets were being produced on the consultation process and the right to make recommendations.

It was also reported that there would be Chester Area Meeting at 7:00pm on Tuesday, 11 February 2003 at County Hall, Chester, to discuss the response from the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils in respect of the proposal for Elected Regional Assemblies.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

44 VERNON INSTITUTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Councillor RA Storrar reported that there had been a meeting of the Vernon Institute Management Committee on 14 January 2003. Proposals for renovations had been discussed.

The Pre-School Playgroup were requesting that the Parish Council make a contribution towards the cost of its new mobile unit.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) an urgent meeting be sought with members of the Vernon Institute Management Committee to discuss the fabric and restoration of the Vernon Institute building and particularly the roof; and
- (3) the request for funding from the Pre-School Playgroup be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.