

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH
COUNCIL held on 3 March 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 C Moss
Councillor R Shukla
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor Mrs D Whitton
Councillor Mrs J Young

45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

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

46 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

(a) Broadband

Mr Vince Pleasant, a resident of Saughall accompanied by Mr John Murray, an officer of Chester City Council, made a presentation on a campaign to get 'Broadband' (a high speed internet access) in Saughall. Access was dependant on the local telephone exchange being upgraded.

It was important to generate interest. A website was available to register interest. When one hundred names were registered BT would set a threshold dependant on the costs of the upgrade.

Mr Murray informed that the whole of Chester's urban area already had Broadband and it was the City Council's stated aim to support any campaign in the rural area. There was an e-government initiative and part of it was that local authorities had to do all they could to encourage Broadband.

The Parish Council had the appropriate links on its website so that residents visiting could move on and register their interest in obtaining Broadband.

RESOLVED: That

(1) Broadband access for Saughall be actively supported;

(2) Members be encouraged to register their interest and encourage other residents to do the same; and

(3) publicity in respect of Broadband be posted on Council notice boards and the next Parish Newsletter will carry information on the awareness campaign.

(b) Anti-Social Behaviour – Meadows Lane

A resident of Meadows Lane drew the Council's attention to ongoing nuisance youth activity that was affecting her quality of life and that of her neighbours. She had complained because a football was constantly damaging her car and garden. As a result, one of the children involved – a ten year old boy – had thrown a large piece of concrete at her house.

The Police had been notified on a number of occasions about the problems associated with the ball games but to no avail.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to write to all residents of Meadows Lane asking that those with children control them and informing that the Council is gathering evidence to present to the Housing Association.

49 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Shukla declared an in Interest in item No 14 – The Threat to Community Pharmacies, as he was the village Pharmacist.

48 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 3 February 2003 be confirmed as a correct record.

49 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute No 34 – Review of Parish Constitution

Councillor B Kerr gave notice that he wanted to revisit the Parish Constitution in six months time.

There had been an article in the Chester Evening Standard on 28 February 2003 informing that Chester City Council's Cabinet had agreed that the number of councillors representing Tarvin Parish Council's two wards should be changed.

For some time there had been an imbalance between the electoral representation of the village ward and outer ward in the Parish as a result of housing development in Tarvin over several decades. At present six parish councillors represented 1,856 electors in the village ward and five parish councillors represented 326 electors in the outer ward.

Tarvin Parish Council had suggested that with effect from May 2006 the total number of councillors should be in direct proportion to the number of electors in each ward. It believed that the village ward should have nine councillors and the outer ward two.

The Cabinet had agreed to the proposed changes and as the reasons for wanting change to the number of councillors representing each ward was not dissimilar to the situation in Saughall and Shotwick Park wards, further consideration would be given to the situation at the appropriate time.

RESOLVED:

That consideration be given to a possible Review of the Parish Constitution at the meeting of the Council scheduled for 1 September 2003.

Minute No 35 – Minutes of Committees and Panels
Community and Safety Committee held on 8 January 2003

It was noted that Mr Peter Hughes of Chester Security Services had not yet indicated if he was agreeable to being co-opted onto the Committee. It was suggested that at the next meeting of the Committee a discussion could be held on CCTV cameras in the hope that Mr Hughes may lend the Council one for use in identified problem areas of the village.

Minute No 38 – Proposed Affordable Housing

No date had been agreed for the next meeting of the Saughall Parish Rural Housing Working Party. As the Council had a number of concerns over what it had been led to believe, no date would be set until after the meeting scheduled for 11 March 2003 with Mr Paul Durham, Chief Executive of Chester City Council.

50 ACCOUNTS

(a) Payments made since the meeting of the Council held on 2 February 2003:

Financial Year 2002/2003	£	Cheque No
STRI (soil testing)	104.35	101576
Ringwood Fencing Ltd	2,367.08	101577
Cheshire Community Council (Best Kept Village Competition)	30.00	101578
Hacker Young (Audit of 2001/2001 Accounts)	293.75	101579
Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council (Street Cleaning)	1,216.81	101580
Warrington Borough Council	137.47	101581
Mrs S Hudspeth (Expenses)	76.18	101582
Mrs S Hudspeth (Salary)	429.48	101583

(b) Receipts

Interest to 21 February 2003 (14 day Interest Account)	41.36
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(c) Audit of Accounts 2001/2002

The External Auditor, Hacker Young, had completed the audit of the 2001/2002 Accounts and had signed them off.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(d) Bank Account

The Chairman reported that he had explored the possibility of changing the Council's Bankers. However, after a thorough investigation he had come to the conclusion that no benefit would be gained by such a course of action.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and no further action be taken.

(e) Grant Aid – Chester Cathedral Sing School Appeal

The County Secretary had forwarded to Cheshire Parish Councils a letter from the Chester Cathedral requesting donations as it had an appeal to raise £600,000 to complete the building of a Song School.

RESOLVED:

That as making a grant would not be of direct benefit to the people of Saughall, no grant be made and the Cheshire Secretary be informed that such donations fall outside the remit of Parish Councils.

51 POLICE/HOMEWATCH

(a) Police

As PC Gareth Cooper had been unable to attend the Police report was deferred until the next meeting of the Council.

(b) Homewatch

As the Acting Homewatch Co-ordinator, Mr Brian Jones, was unable to attend the meeting the Homewatch report was deferred until the next meeting of the Council.

(c) Nuisance Youth Activity – Bus Shelter Vandalism

Vandals had been targeting the two new bus shelters erected by Cheshire County Council at the Ridings and on Church Road. Their panes of toughened glass were being broken on a regular basis.

At the request of the Council, the Clerk had informed Superintendent Nick Ingram of the problem, copying in PC Gareth Cooper and Sergeant Ian Ankers. The Superintendent had requested that in future the Clerk deal with Inspector Geoff Williams and had passed the information on.

The Chairman reported that he had received an e-mail from Sergeant Ian Ankers informing that he did not know that damage had been caused to the bus shelters

Members were concerned over the way the village was being policed and had little confidence in it. It seemed to be responsive and there was no longer a proactive approach.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairman be requested to liaise with Inspector Geoff Williams on the bus shelter vandalism and other issues of concern and bring a report to the next meeting of the Council.

52 THE CLERK'S CONTRACT

The Council considered the Clerk's revised Contract of Employment.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Clerk and Chairman be requested to sign the revised Contract; and
- (2) the new Contract and revised Conditions of Service within it be operable from 1 April 2003.

53 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Minutes of the following Committees and Panels be received:

Planning Committee held on 3 February 2003

Golden Jubilee Park Panel held on 13 February 2003

Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 20 February 2003

Meeting of Parish Councillors and Representatives of the Vernon Institute
Management Committee held on 27 February 2003

- (2) the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee be held at 7:30pm on 24 April 2003 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall; and
- (3) the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee scheduled for 20 March and 17 April 2003 be cancelled.

54 HIGHWAYS MATTERS

- (a) District Engineer's Site Visit

Councillor Kerr reported that the site visit with the District Engineer had been carried out on 5 February 2003.

The District Engineer had agreed to repair all of the potholes on village roads. The state of Fiddlers Lane had been drawn to his attention. A lot of damage had been caused by heavy plant. He was arranging for his site team to tidy it up and clean the verges.

Hermitage Road required complete resurfacing and the District Engineer was trying to get it included in the Programme. In the meantime, he would do his utmost to maintain it at a high standard, within budget constraints.

The District Engineer did not believe flooding on Fiddlers Lane was caused by a telegraph pole blocking the drain. He did agree, however, to have it looked at. A blocked drain on private land was causing the flooding on Hermitage Road.

It was noted that the hedges on Hermitage Road had now been cut back.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

- (b) Proposal to reduce speed of traffic passing the Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School

Miss Kay Hallas, Senior Technician, Traffic and Transportation, had explained that basically, if the average speeds on a length of road were around 20 mph, the Highways Authority could consider putting a 20 mph speed limit on the road but such a speed restriction would not automatically be adopted without investigating the situation.

It was reported that there were currently three traffic counts ongoing in Saughall.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Miss K Hallas be thanked for providing a clearer explanation; and
- (2) it be ascertained if the current traffic counts were at Miss Hallas' instigation and if they were, the Clerk request that the Council be informed of the results.

- (c) Traffic Congestion at the Ridings Community Infant School

The Clerk reported that PC Cooper had agreed to give the area outside the School passing attention at appropriate times. The Council had seen no evidence of this and the situation had not improved.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairman be requested to raise the traffic congestion around the School as an issue of concern with Inspector Geoff Williams.

55 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 remained in the ditch and a promise was made to retrieve it and erect it on the field.

RESOLVED:

That the position be noted and the goalpost's progress be reported at the next meeting of the Council.

(b) Golden Jubilee Park

The Council was brought up-to-date on progress being made on the Golden Jubilee Park development. Mr Easby of the Cheshire Playing Fields Association, following various site meetings and the Panel meeting on 13 February 2003, had agreed to draw up a detailed specification and layout at a cost of £200. These would be available for the meeting with the City Council's Planners on 19 March 2003 when it was hoped progress could be made on the planning application.

A further site visit would be undertaken on 6 March 2003 and Mr D Bird of Fiddlers Lane would be available to join Mr Easby and Councillors Kerr and Moss.

It was noted that a Project Officer would need to be appointed at the appropriate time and quotations would be sought if necessary.

The Council considered whether it should arrange to dredge the pond now or at a future date. It was agreed that as the necessary plant would be on site in the future the work required on the pond be carried out then.

It was noted that the City Council Planning Department had not been in contact over the planning application submitted in respect of the permanency of the Scout Headquarters although Cheshire County Council had written twice to inform that it was being consulted as the Strategic Planning Authority and then to tell the Clerk that it had no objections to the application. This issue would be raised with the Planners on 19 March 2003.

Councillor Kerr informed that he was now in receipt of the WREN application pack for landfill tax funding. No bid could be submitted until appropriate quotations were available but the Council was eligible for funding.

Power Systems had informed the Clerk that it was in negotiation with local landowners to re-route the cable underground on land in their ownership.

The Council also considered the residents on Long Lane and Fiddlers Lane. As they lived very close to the development it was agreed that appropriate consultations would be carried out once the plans were firmed up.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made be noted and a further report be made at the next meeting informing of the outcome following the meeting with Chester City Council Planners on 19 March 2003.

(c) Tree Warden's Report

The Tree Warden reported that he had carried out some work on trees in the village. He also reported that following a recent storm tree branches were lying on Coal Pit Lane.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the Clerk be requested to ask the District Engineer to collect the offending branches and dispose of them as appropriate.

(d) Parish Paths Warden's Report

It was reported that Mr Leach had had no reply from the Public Rights of Way Officer and no remedial work had been carried out in Saughall.

A walker with a pacemaker had felt queasy when he had passed an electric fence.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the Chairman be requested to speak to the owner of the electric fence.

(e) Grassed Amenity Areas – Greenway and Saughall Hey

It was reported that Chester City Council's contractors had cut the grass in February obliterating the spring bulbs planted in the Autumn. This had been done despite the agreement that had been made with Mr Duncan Henderson of Chester City Council to keep the grass longer to deter ball games.

No action had been taken in respect of the bollards.

RESOLVED: That

(1) these issues be discussed at the meeting with Mr Paul Durham, Chief Executive of Chester City Council, scheduled for 11 April 2003; and

(2) powdered lime be put down as a marker next year when bulbs are planted.

(f) Best Kept Village/Civic Pride Competition

The Council received a report on proceedings of the meeting held in Northwich on 5 February 2003 to signify the launch of the 2003 competition from the Chairman and Councillor Mrs Young who had attended.

Members turned their attention to the current state of the village and agreed that it could do with being spruced up. A letter had been sent to all traders in the village asking them to keep their frontages clean.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be received;

(2) the Clerk be requested to write to the two Headteachers, including a copy of the letter sent to traders, requesting that every effort is made to keep the school environs clear of litter; and

(3) the Clerk be requested to add the Texaco garage on the Parkgate Road to the list of areas/properties the Council wishes the Competition judges to ignore.

(g) Bus Shelter Lighting

The County Transport Co-ordinator informed that he was experiencing some minor problems with the lighting of the two new bus shelters and was currently trying to resolve it with Trueform Engineers.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(h) Street Signs

The Clerk reported that she had requested that Chester City Council provide and erect two new street signs for Aspen Grove. She had been informed by Ms Lindy Mulligan that there was no funding available currently as the budget had already been spent. A waiting list was in operation and the Aspen Grove signs were now on it.

It was noted that in future funding for street signs may come through the new Area Committees being set up by Chester City Council.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(i) Vernon Institute Clock

The Vernon Institute Clock was not illuminated effectively and parts of it could be seen behind the clock face. The Clerk had written to JB Joyce of Whitchurch asking them if they could suggest a way of improving the situation.

Advice had been received from JB Joyce but they were not able to carry out the necessary work themselves and suggested that an electrician be commissioned to carry out the rewiring work required.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to obtain quotations from local electricians to carry out the improvement works.

56 PARISH PLAN

The Chairman reported that the Countryside Agency had been in touch with him and had a few questions which he would respond to. He would report further at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received..

57 PARISH COUNCIL SURGERIES

RESOLVED:

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

Date	Member
8 March 2003	Councillor B Kerr
15 March 2003	Councillor RA Storrar
22 March 2003	Councillor C Moss
29 March 2003	Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
5 April 2003	Councillor Mrs J Young

58 THE THREAT TO COMMUNITY PHARMACIES

The Clerk provided a letter that could be used as a basis for informing the local MP of the concerns expressed over the recommendations of the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) report.

The Clerk had also written to Christine Russell MP setting out the Council's concerns over the proposals that would cause many local pharmacies to close. Ms Russell had responded informing that she had copied the letter to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Health, David Lammy MP, so that he was aware of the Council's concerns and had the opportunity to respond. She would write to the Clerk again once his response was received.

Ms Russell also informed that she was a member of the All-Party Pharmacy Group and in the interim enclosed a copy of the report that it had sent to the Minister.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received; and
- (2) the Clerk be requested to write to the appropriate Groups in the village alerting them to the proposals and offering them the letter she had written to use as a base for any representations they may wish to make to Christine Russell MP in the circumstances.

59 COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED

The following communications had been received:

- letter from County Planning Officer dated 11 February 2003 informing that the County Council, as the Strategic Planning Authority, does not object to a variation in conditions 2 and 4 on planning reference 97/234/FUL to allow permanent permission for the Scout Hut at land adjacent to the Playing Field, Fiddlers Lane, Saughall.

NOTED.

- letter from Mr M Evans, Chief Planning Services Officer, Flintshire County Council, dated 20 February 2003 informing that his Council intends to place on deposit a proposed modification to the Local Plan.

NOTED.

- letter from Mr A Bowring, Countryside Access Development Officer dated 13 February 2003 regarding the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Weaver Valley Pilot Project 2003.

NOTED.

- letter from Mr C Stredder, Principal Engineer (Traffic and Transportation Division), County Engineers Department regarding the Review of Minor Highway Improvements List.

NOTED.

- Chester Police Forum Minutes – 20 January 2003

NOTED.

- Cheshire and Warrington Local Access Forum – Friday, 14 March 2003 at 10:00am, the Conference Room, Town Hall, High Street, Congleton.

NOTED.

60 CIRCULARS RECEIVED

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

Cheshire County Council's "Six of the Best" – Road training schemes to bring out the best in your skills.

Cheshire Community Council's Northgate Development: binvolved!

Chester Community Safety Partnership's Chester Watch Briefing Sheet

Chester City Council's The Past Uncovered

Cheshire County Council's Cheshire's Rural Touring Network Spring 2003 programme.

Agenda for Chester City Council's Budget Meeting – Wednesday, 26 February 2003

Cheshire County Council's Cheshire Signpost – Spring 2003

61 REGIONAL GOVERNMENT DEBATE, COUNTY HALL, CHESTER
7:00PM, TUESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY, 2003

The Chairman reported on the proceedings of a meeting some Members had attended at County Hall arranged to draw up a response from the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils in respect of the Government's proposals to establish Elected Regional Assemblies.

It had been agreed to send no views to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and concerns had been raised over the way the consultation had been undertaken. The only indication that the process was underway was via the internet.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

62 CHESTER RURAL NORTH LOCAL PANEL MEETING
7:00PM, THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2003 AT MOLLINGTON, BACKFORD
AND DISTRICT HALL

The Chairman reported on the proceedings of the last meeting of the Panel. Different arrangements would be in force from the beginning of the next financial year with the introduction of Area Committees. Ms Anne Lancaster, Chester City Council's Lead Officer on Area Committees, had been in attendance and the opportunity was provided to meet her.

Sergeant Ian Ankers had been at the meeting and had made a presentation on Project Rural Matters. The Cheshire Constabulary considered that it had been a success in 2002/2003 and would fund it again in 2003/2004. In the light of this the Chairman, on the Council's behalf, had written to the Chief Constable after consulting with the Finance and General Purposes Committee Members informally. A response was awaited.

The meeting had also discussed the provision of portable speed warning signs and costings. It was expected that they would cost in the region of £2,000.

The Council considered that it might obtain one at the appropriate time, part funding it from its Community Safety budget.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be received; and

(2) consideration be given to acquiring a portable speed warning sign in the new Municipal year.

63 QUALITY PARISH STATUS – NATIONAL SEMINAR
TUESDAY, 18 MARCH 2003 – 9AM-4PM

Councillor Kerr informed that as Chairman of NALC he would be attending this event. It would include sessions on the launch and implementation of the Quality Parish Status initiative, as well as a keynote address from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, speakers from NALC and the LGA, and plenary sessions and workshops covering such themes as community engagement and other features of the QPS criteria.

The delegate fee for the seminar was £60+VAT per person.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Kerr be requested to report back on the proceedings of the Seminar and no other representatives be sent.

64 PLAYGROUND SEMINAR – TUESDAY, 8 APRIL 2003 – 10:30AM-4:00PM AT
NORTHWICH MEMORIAL HALL

This seminar was being arranged jointly between the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils and the Cheshire County Playing Fields Association supported by Vale Royal Borough Council. The cost would be £15 per person.

RESOLVED:

That Councillors Mrs Humphrey and Moss be requested to inform the Clerk if they are able to go so that she can make the necessary arrangements.

65 LICENSING BILL

The Council received a letter from the Right Hon Alun Michael, the Minister for Rural Affairs and Urban Quality of Life, along with a statement on the Licensing Bill.

A number of Parish Councils had made representations about the possible impact on village life of the Licensing Bill which was currently before Parliament. The Ministerial Statement issued by Tessa Jowell MP, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, went a long way to meeting those concerns and arose from the willingness of Ministers to listen to those with experience at local level.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the letter and statement be noted.

66 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business listed below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

Item	Paragraph
Vernon Institute Management Committee	7) Financial/Business affairs of a third party.

PART 2 – ITEMS OF A CONFIDENTIAL NATURE DISCUSSED IN THE ABSENCE OF
THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

67 VERNON INSTITUTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Members received a briefing on issues effecting the Vernon Institute at the present time, strategies in place to bring about improvement and its current financial situation.

It was noted that the meeting held between representatives of the Parish Council and the Vernon Institute Management Committee on 27 February 2003 had been very useful. There had been a forthright and sensible debate and the Management Committee was moving forward with clear ideas about what it needed to do and timescales for doing it.

RESOLVED:

That the funding put aside to assist the refurbishment and improve the fabric of the Vernon Institute be made available subject to receipt of satisfactory quotations for work required being provided.