

MINUTES OF A MEETING TO DISCUSS EXTERNAL FUNDING FOR THE VERNON INSTITUTE AND THE GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK held on 8 August 2002 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Representing the Parish Council:
Councillor CW Eyton
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
Councillor B Kerr (in the Chair)
Councillor C Moss
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor Mrs J Young

Representing the Vernon Institute Management Committee
Mr B Huxley (Chairman)
Mr H Dobson (Treasurer)

Representing Chester City Council
Ms S Morrison – External Funding Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs M Anderson and A Warrington.

2 PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The meeting had been arranged so that representatives of the Parish Council and the Vernon Institute Management Committee could discuss their initiatives with Chester City Council's External Funding Officer and seek advice on opportunities to attract grant aid.

3 CHESTER CITY COUNCIL'S EXTERNAL FUNDING TEAM

Ms Morrison informed the meeting of her own duties and responsibilities and those of her colleagues, Chester City Council's External Funding Team of which she was a member. Some officers dealt with domestic issues e.g. lottery, landfill tax, trusts and the private sector, whilst others dealt with European funding. The officers who made up the Team had various specialism and expertise which could be drawn upon and which would prove useful in targeting grants for smaller initiatives within the overall schemes.

The Team published a quarterly magazine 'The Key' which provided up to date information on the National Lottery, Companies who provided financial aid and other funding opportunities.

The City Council supported groups in the voluntary sector by hosting various training events which it heavily subsidised. The Parish Council had requested a place on a training course which would be run in October 2002.

4 ASSISTANCE OFFERED

Ms Morrison informed the meeting that she was in attendance on a fact finding mission to establish what the Parish Council and the Vernon Institute Management Committee hoped to achieve. She would then hold discussions with her colleagues and produce a separate funding brief for each organisation.

5 VERNON INSTITUTE

Mr Huxley provided background information on the registered charity and set out the problems facing the Vernon Institute Management Committee as it tried to secure funding to bring about improvement to the Vernon Institute, a listed building, in desperate need of modernisation. The aim was that the Vernon Institute could once again be at a standard to meet the needs of the people of Saughall and be at the heart of village life.

Ms Morrison informed on recent changes to lottery funding and on a pilot scheme which was expected to be rolled out early in 2003. The External Funding Team was currently working on a Funding Fact Pack for village halls and when it was finalised a copy would be sent to Mr Huxley.

The meeting was informed of a range of funding opportunities available to help improve the fabric of the Vernon Institute. It was also noted that there could be restrictions on grant aid. It was possible that the Vernon Institute may encounter problems as a similar bid to modernise community property by another organisation in the village had been successful recently. Ms Morrison provided some helpful advice on the preparation of bids (citing examples she had experienced in her work), gave tips and offered to look over any draft funding applications before submission. Constructive criticism would be offered as necessary. As information available from the Census carried out in Saughall was important and could inform bids being prepared Ms Morrison agreed to ask Chester City Council's Research Team to provide it. A bid was more likely to be successful if it could be shown that the facilities available did not meet the needs of the current population of Saughall.

Ms Morrison also informed that a bid that was unsuccessful in one round may be successful in a future round. There were a number of bids competing for scarce resources so the secret was not to give up but to carry out revisions and resubmit the bid in the next round.

6 GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK

Councillor Kerr provided information on the Parish Council's Golden Jubilee Park initiative being progressed on land in its ownership on Fiddlers Lane. Advice from the Cheshire Playing Fields Association was that the cost of the scheme would be in the region of £100,000.

The Council did not intend to work alone on this project but in partnership with other groups in the village e.g. Saughall Cricket Club and Saughall Colts, who would be able to attract funding that was not available to a Parish Council.

Ms Morrison discussed the various funding opportunities and their criteria available for the scheme to the Council and to other supporting groups. She informed that

security of tenure was an important consideration when a decision to provide funding was being considered. Therefore it might be appropriate for the Council to discuss leasing a proportion of its land at a peppercorn rent to its partners. Ms Morrison agreed to find out the best approach and report back.

Ms Morrison agreed to put Chester City Council's Sports Development Team in touch with the Clerk so that a visit could be arranged and advice obtained. She would also obtain advice on grant aid for an environmental scheme around the pond.

7 "SELF HELP"

Ms Morrison informed that bids for grant were more likely to succeed if the group making them could demonstrate "self help", initiative was being taken, that work was being done in kind and other funders were being approached. She agreed to provide advice on fund raising plans.

8 CONCLUSIONS

Both the Parish Council and the Vernon Institute Management Committee agreed that the meeting had been very useful and the information provided by Ms Morrison would be very valuable when making applications for grant aid. Both looked forward to receiving funding briefs in due course and agreed to ask Chester City Council's External Funding Team to look over any funding bids prepared prior to their submission.