

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on 14 November 2002 in the Parish Room, Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs M Anderson
Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)
Councillor CW Eyton
Councillor R Shukla.
Councillor A Warrington

57 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor B Kerr.

58 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 September 2002 be confirmed as a correct record.

59 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

60 FIVE YEAR PLAN OF ACTION

The Committee reviewed and revised its Five Year Plan of Action making amendments and additions as it considered appropriate. (Appendix 1)

The Chairman raised the possibility of preparing a Charter setting out how the Council would work with the local community in future. A Code of Practice could be drawn up along the lines of Cheshire County Council's Charter with Local Councils.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Council be **RECOMMENDED** to consider the revised Five Year Plan of Action and endorse it;
- (2) Council be **RECOMMENDED** to consider drawing up a Charter with the local community detailing how it plans to operate, liaise and consult its electorate;
- (3) the Clerk be requested to ascertain what criteria is used in determining whether or not a zebra crossing can be introduced and investigate other traffic calming measures that could be implemented on Church Road to reduce the speed traffic passes the Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School; and
- (4) if Council agrees to the Committee's recommendation to retain the Parish Room at a reduced rent, subject to various conditions (Minute No. 62/2002 below refers), occupation of the room be revisited and reviewed on an annual basis.

61 PARISH PLAN

The Chairman reported that he was now convinced that the Council should provide a Parish Plan. Although not a necessity in respect of the Council's work in general terms, a Plan was desirable if the Council wished to seek "Quality" Parish Council status (the Council's stated aim). However, having received the recent presentation from Ms Rachel Cowan, Parishes Officer, Cheshire Community Council, he had reservations and now believed that to seek the full £5,000 grant available from the Countryside Agency to compile a Parish Plan was not an appropriate way forward for this Council.

At a previous meeting the Committee had "cherry picked" work it wished to commission Cheshire Community Council to carry out to prepare a Plan and the Committee agreed that the cost of this work along with other estimated costs in relation to Members time, the Clerk's time and various consultations deemed necessary should form the basis of a bid for funding.

The Committee was aware of the Community Council's recommendation that the Council employ, on a casual basis, the services of an outside consultant aided and trained by Ms Cowan and her colleagues to carry out necessary work that the Council and Clerk were unable to do for various reasons. Although it was accepted that the services of an outside consultant were necessary, Members agreed that he would only need to be used in a limited fashion and his consequent limited costs should be included in the bid for funding.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the Council move forward along the lines set out above with the aim of producing a Parish Plan; and
- (2) arrangements be made for key Members of the Council, the Clerk and Ms Cowan to meet in order to put together a successful bid to fund the compilation of the Parish Plan.

62 PARISH ROOM

The Committee considered whether the Council's occupation of the Parish Room was providing value for money and revisited the recommendations it had made to Council at its last meeting on 20 September 2002, in the light of a recent development.

The landlord, Mr C Moss, had approached the Chairman and informed that he was willing to reduce the annual rent for the Parish Room from £1,750 to £1,250. The Chairman outlined the costs involved (Appendix 2) and asked the Committee whether it considered the Parish Room to be value for money in the light of the reduced rent, the usage in 2002/03 and the expected increased usage in 2003/04 as the Golden Jubilee Park was developed.

The Clerk reported that Chester City Council had informed that no non domestic rates – rural rate relief had been awarded. As pointed out when the Council had applied for charitable relief, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 S47(9) stated relief could not be awarded to premises which were occupied by a precepting authority unless the organisation was a trustee.

Members noted that their original recommendation to vacate the Parish Room from 31 March 2003 had taken into account other considerations including its stated aim to support the Vernon Institute which was desperately in need of funding and refurbishment.

However, as there would be an increased need for the Parish Room in 2003 the Committee agreed to reverse its recommendation to Council, subject to the landlord improving the fabric of the office, in particular the access and fitting a digital lock.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the Council continue to occupy the Parish Room at the reduced annual rent of £1,250 from 1 April 2003, subject to the conditions set out above;
- (2) in future an annual review of occupancy of the Parish Room be carried out by the Council; and
- (3) the Council continue to lobby and look for a way to get the rates of the Parish Room reduced and to pursue the possibility of having a rating valuation carried out.

63 VITAL VILLAGES: HOW YOU CAN HELP IMPROVE VILLAGE LIFE

The Committee received correspondence from Christine Russell MP including a letter from Mr Ewen Cameron, Chairman of the Countryside Agency, which set out details of funding opportunities for local projects that have not already benefited from its grant schemes.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the correspondence be noted.

64 PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET

The Committee gave initial consideration to the Council's budget for 2003/04 assigning priorities as it considered appropriate in advance of the Budget meeting scheduled for Monday, 20 January 2003. An interim revised budget for 2003/04 was prepared. (Appendix 3)

RECOMMENDED:

That Appendix 3 to the Minutes form the basis for discussion when the Council determines its budget and sets its precept at its meeting on 20 January 2003.

65 GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK

The Committee was informed that there would be a Special Meeting of the Council at 7:30pm on Tuesday, 26 November 2002 to consider four quotations received from contractors interested in the work necessary to develop the land on Fiddlers Lane. The contractor who would carry out the work would be agreed at the Special Meeting.

It was noted that Chester City Council had still not given any indication on whether or not the Council's bid for funding to assist the Park's development had been successful.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made so far in respect of the Golden Jubilee Park be noted.

66 BUS SHELTER SCHEMES

The Clerk at the request of the Committee had queried when the second phase of the Bus Shelter Scheme would be undertaken.

Mrs Christine Garner, Principal Policy and Projects Officer, Transport Co-ordination Service, Cheshire County Council, had responded informing that it was agreed that 2 bus shelters would be provided in Saughall parish in 2001/02. However, due to lack of engineering resources, the shelters were not installed until May 2002. She proposed to raise an invoice to the Parish Council for the contribution that was required towards these shelters within the next couple of weeks. She hoped the Council was happy with the works that had been carried out, and the maintenance of the shelters to date. The shelters were not lit, Mrs Garner apologised for the delay and informed that she was currently working to resolve the matter.

It had also been agreed that a further 2 bus shelters would be provided in Saughall Parish in the following year. The scheme limited Parish Councils to 2 shelters per year. Mrs Garner was therefore proposing that these shelters now be included in the 2003/04 programme. Work on the design and implementation of this scheme would therefore commence in April 2003. Unfortunately, it would not be possible to carry out the works any sooner, as the programme of bus stop works being carried out in 2002/03 was extensive and all funds had been allocated to schemes.

RESOLVED:

That the position regarding bus shelters in Saughall be noted.

67 CLERK'S MODEL CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

The Committee received a Parish Clerk's Model Contract of Employment and Statement of Particulars of Employment along with full details of the 2002/03 national salary award for Local council Clerks.

The Chairman indicated that it was important to consider the implications of the information supplied in detail and in the light of the Clerk's current Contract of Employment.

RESOLVED:

That consideration of the Clerk's Model Contract of Employment and Statement of Particulars of Employment along with the new pay scale and the Clerk's pay rise be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee so that various implications that arise can be looked into.

68 NEWSLETTER

The Committee discussed the format the next newsletter would take, offered suggestions and advice and asked that particular items and local information be included in it.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk take on board the points and suggestions made by the Committee when compiling the Council's next newsletter.

Saughall and Shotwick Park Parish Council

5 Year Plan 2003/2008

Vision

To improve the quality of life for the people of Saughall and Shotwick Park.

Mission

To establish community pride, to provide quality services and continuous improvement.

Key Aims

- ?? To be open, accessible and responsive.
- ?? To seek continuous improvement and best value in all services.
- ?? To work in partnership for the benefit of all.
- ?? To protect the environment.

This plan has been prepared as part of the Council's commitment to provide 'Best Value'. This means continuously reviewing the needs of the parish and improving the services provided and the way they are delivered. This plan will be reviewed and updated annually.

Sports and Recreation

2003/2004 To monitor the drainage on Fiddlers Lane Playing Field; and to provide a weekly cut in the grass growing season.

2003/2004 To pursue the acquisition of Shotwick land, for use as recreational land.

2003/2004 To commence preparation of acquired land for use as a cricket pitch and other field sports.

2003/2004 To arrange a briefing with residents of the village on progress being made in respect of the Golden Jubilee Park and affordable housing.

Annually To review the children's playground in Fiddlers Lane and replace damaged and worn out equipment.

Affordable Housing to meet Local Need

2003/2004 To facilitate the use of the land behind Parkway for affordable housing.

Street and Amenity Cleaning

Annually To review the street cleaning provision.

Annually To have dialogue with both the County and City Councils to request they review the frequency of drain inspection and drain clearance

Traffic Calming

2003/2004 To continue to press the County Council to implement traffic safety improvements at the junction of Long Lane with Parkgate Road.

2003/2004 To find out the cost of speed signs and flashing school signs.

2003/2004 To reinvestigate the cost of rumble strips on Sea Hill Road and Long lane.

Annually To review the effectiveness of traffic calming measures already provided and to update as required.

Community Safety

2003/2004 To develop a Community Safety Strategy in partnership with the Cheshire Constabulary and Homewatch.

2003/2004 To improve liaison between Cheshire Constabulary, Homewatch and the Parish Council.

Annually To continuously keep under review any measures which need to be taken in the interests of community safety and crime prevention.

Annually The Community Safety Committee to liaise with the Homewatch Committee over crime prevention schemes.

Annually To provide financial support for the Homewatch Committee.

Annually To review the effectiveness of the Community Policing Plan.

Voluntary Organisations

Annually To review what practical help is required by the voluntary sector within the community and to assist in the launch of new organisations.

Annually To advertise the contact details of all voluntary groups in the village via the Parish Newsletter and website.

Amenity Provision

Annually To monitor the provision of retail services within the village and offer whatever assistance is available to any businesses.

Public Transport

Annually To monitor the provision of bus services.

Annually To consider the provision/replacement of bus shelters.

Street Lighting

Annually To review street lighting and provide new and improved lighting at black spots.

Parish Council Structure

Annually To review the frequency of meetings and the Committee structure.

Public Consultation

Annually To issue half-yearly newsletters.

Annually To review weekly Council Surgeries.

Annually To promote the Parish Council website.

Planning

To progress the following recommendation as a possible policy for the future:

“To adopt a policy which would ensure that any future development in the village could only go ahead if a sum of money was commuted to the Parish Council by the developer for the benefit of the village as a whole”

Dated: 21 November 2002

Saughall and Shotwick Park Parish Council

Saughall Parish Office - Costing

Number of Electors in Ward	2,512
Number of Households	1,428
Meetings held 2003/03	92 (including 48 Surgeries)

2003/03 Costs

Rates	1,048
Rent	1,750
Water Rates	45
Total	2,843

Estimated 2003/04

Rates	1,100	(plus 5%)
Rent	1,250	(Rent reduction)
Water Rates	48	(plus 5%)
Total	2,398	Reduction of £445

Cost per Meeting

2002/03	£ 30.90
Estimated 2003/04	£ 26.07

Cost per Elector

2002/03	£ 1.13
Estimated 2003/04	£ 0.95

DO YOU CONSIDER THIS TO BE VALUE FOR MONEY, BEARING IN MIND THE PARISH WILL BE USING THIS FACILITY MORE IN 2003/04 FOR LESS COST THAN THE CURRENT YEAR?

Saughall and Shotwick Park Parish Council

Proposed Budget 2003/2004

Budget Head	Proposed 2003/2004	Priority
Environment Matters		
Best Kept Village Competition	200.00	1
Noticeboards	150.00	1
Street Cleaning	9,000.00	1
Trees	300.00	2
Litter Bins	500.00	2
Grass Cutting (Playing Fields) (Weekly cut)	2,400.00	1
Golden Jubilee Park	2,000.00	1
Play Equipment (rolling replacement programme)	2,000.00	1
Sub Total	16,550.00	
Finance and General Purposes		
(a) Administration		
Clerk's salary and NI	7,250.00	1
Administration Expenses	700.00	1
Parish Councillor's Expenses	150.00	1
Computer	500.00	1
Parish Plan	500.00	1
Newsletter publication costs	500.00	1
Training Fund	1,000.00	1
IT Fund	500.00	1
Sub Total	11,100.00	
(b) Annual Payments		
Parish Room rental and associated costs	2,500.00	1
Audit Fees	400.00	1
Donations/Honorarium	250.00	2
Insurance	1,000.00	1
Subscriptions (APC £500, PFA £20, Com Cl £30)	600.00	1
VI Clock Service	200.00	1
Website Hosting	150.00	1
Homewatch Support	150.00	1
Golden Jubilee Park Loan Repayment	2,373.00	1
Sub Total	5,250.00	
(c) Vernon Institute - Annual Grant	1,000.00	1
(d) Contingency		
Highways Matters		
Street Lighting		
Bus Shelter replacement	1,000.00	1
Bus Shelter maintenance	500.00	1
Traffic Calming	500.00	
Sub Total	2,000.00	
Grand Total	35,900.00	