

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK'S PARISH PLAN STEERING GROUP held on 12 August 2002 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)
Councillor B Kerr
Councillor A Marsden
Councillor C Moss
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor R Shukla
Mrs A Amesbury
Revd M Banks – Methodist Church
Miss S Brooks – Guide Association
Mr K Evans – Saughall Colts
Mr J Hallas – All Saints Parochial Church Council
Mr B Jones – Saughall Homewatch
Mrs S Silversides
Mr G Southey – Saughall Gardening Club

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs D Whitton.

2 SETTING THE SCENE – THE NEED FOR A PLAN

The Chairman reported that the Parish Council was keen to facilitate the compilation of a Parish Plan. It hoped that local people would set out a vision for the future of their village. A Parish Plan Steering Group had been established. Its membership had been drawn from the local area and consisted of Councillors, interested people who could represent the various Groups in the village and key individuals with specialist knowledge and experience which could assist the Plan's development.

A Parish Plan could cover everything that was relevant to the people who lived and worked in the Parishes of Saughall and Shotwick Park, from social housing to places for children to play. It should address the needs of the entire community, including businesses. It may identify actions to address housing, services, the village hall (Vernon Institute) and other community buildings, land use issues and design, transport, local green space and countryside access. It should reflect the policies of Chester City Council's Local Development Plan and identify how they could be put into practice within the community.

Everyone in the village would have an opportunity to contribute to its preparation. The Plan would contain actions to address the needs and issues identified by the Plan Community and it should propose solutions. It was vital to reach out beyond the Parish Council and traditional Local Groups would be involved in shaping and distributing surveys and questionnaires and in considering and adopting alternative consultation mechanisms. This action plan could be used to demonstrate need and local support when applying for grants and would contribute to the development of local plans and community strategies.

The Parish Council hoped eventually to apply for “Quality Parish Council” status and therefore the production of a Parish Plan was desirable and would assist its application.

The Countryside Agency, through its Vital Villages Initiative, would fund community audit and action plans that integrated social, economic and environmental issues identified by the whole community.

A grant of up to £5,000 was available to meet a maximum of 75% of the costs of developing and producing a Parish Plan. The balance of 25% of the cost, of which 5% must be cash, should be met locally. This could be from the Parish Council’s own funds; another local authority; in kind or professional services; or some other service which would normally be paid for; from special fundraising events; or from local sponsorship or donation.

3 PARISH PLAN ACTION LIST

The Council had already undertaken some preliminary work towards the compilation of a Parish Plan by drawing up an Action List and the meeting considered it. It was noted that there had been some slippage but it was now important to revise this Plan, consider further actions required and ensure that they were taken within appropriate timescales. This would ensure that the Parish Plan was progressed satisfactorily.

The next Key Action which must be taken was to make an application for grant aid to the Countryside Agency in respect of costs associated with the drawing up of the Plan. The application form and work required were both complex and time-consuming. Although daunting it was **AGREED** to make completion of the bid a priority and arrangements would be made to work through the application with a view to submitting it to Mrs Vivien Ellis at the Cheshire Community Council. She had agreed to offer advice and constructive criticism before the application was finalised and forwarded as a formal bid for funding to the Countryside Agency.

It was noted that if the funding application was successful in attracting the necessary funding the Cheshire Community Council would be commissioned to carry out preparatory work identified by the Parish Council which included a community questionnaire, the conduction of the survey and a report on subsequent findings at a cost of approximately £2,640.

4 PARISH COUNCIL’S FIVE YEAR PLAN OF ACTION

The Parish Council had previously undertaken an initiative which involved the drawing up of a Five Year Plan of Action. Following its completion it had been reviewed, revised and rolled forward annually. The current Plan was for the period 2002/2007 and covered the following:

- Sports and Recreation
- Street and Amenity Cleaning
- Traffic Calming
- Crime Prevention and Community Safety
- Voluntary Organisations
- Amenity Provision
- Public Transport

Street Lighting
Parish Council's Committee Structure
Public Consultation
Planning

The general aim of the Five Year Plan was to bring about improvements to the quality of life of the people of Saughall and Shotwick Park and to generate community pride, provide quality services and continue to make appropriate improvements.

The compilation of the Parish Plan would compliment and build upon the work already begun by the Council. It would ensure that the needs of the two parishes were identified and reviewed and would facilitate any necessary improvements to service provision and delivery, using a partnership approach with other organisations, including in particular Principal Authorities, the Cheshire Constabulary and the various Community Groups prevalent in the village. It was recognised that the Parish Council could not achieve success on its own but would need input and assistance from the wider community.

5 SPECIFIC PROJECTS/ISSUES IDENTIFIED FOR INCLUSION ON THE PARISH PLAN

The meeting gave consideration to specific projects and issues which it **AGREED** should be built into the Parish Plan as follows:

(a) Golden Jubilee Park

Land had already been acquired by the Parish Council for recreational purposes. It was intended that facilities would be made available for the playing of football and cricket along with those for various other activities which were being considered and consulted upon.

The Parish Council could not move this initiative forward on its own and was relying on partnership arrangements forged with local interest groups in the village. These Groups were able to attract grant aid which was not available to the Parish Council.

Other land, off Lodge Lane, currently in the ownership of Cheshire County Council was designated in the Chester District Local Plan for recreational use. It was hoped that it could be acquired by the Council for the community's use, sometime in the future.

(b) All Saints Church Burial Ground

The Vicar, Revd David Hay, had advised that the present graveyard would be full within the next five years.

A part of the land off Lodge Lane mentioned in (a) above could be earmarked for burials and was another reason why the Council was keen to acquire it.

(c) A New Methodist Church

Revd Banks informed that the Methodist Church and Hall needed a great deal of work and funding to bring about improvements required for it to meet an appropriate standard.

The Methodist Churches' Property Committee had considered various options including the possibility of demolishing both buildings and erecting a community hall with adequate car parking provision and a memorial ground. The Committee had agreed to explore the proposal further and take soundings from within the local community. It wanted to know what villagers wanted and how the Methodist Church could serve the village. If there was sufficient interest it intended to take forward the initiative to provide a multi purpose building.

It was **AGREED** that the Methodist Church would consult on and discuss with the Vernon Institute Management Committee its proposal for a new community building to avoid duplication or competition over grant opportunities. A further report on these discussions would be brought to the next meeting.

(d) Modernisation of the Vernon Institute

It was noted that various funding opportunities were being explored by the Vernon Institute Management Committee as it was vital for it to attract grant aid in order to bring about much needed refurbishment and to improve the fabric of the Vernon Institute building. It needed to be at a standard appropriate for a meeting place in the Twenty First Century.

(e) Provision of Affordable Housing for Local People

It was recognised that Saughall needed some low cost housing to meet local needs. Young people had to leave the village because they could not afford to buy property in Saughall.

A Saughall Parish Rural Housing Working Group had been established to identify sites in the village for affordable housing development. However, the Chairman made it clear that unless guarantees could be given that low cost housing would be allocated to local people the Parish Council would not be willing to progress this initiative any further. An undertaking that any affordable housing provision in Saughall, in the future, would be specifically for local village people was required from Chester City Council. It was imperative that there was some control and that affordable housing was provided as a means by which young people in the village could get a foot on the property ladder. The current Housing Allocations Policy and the Points System meant that frequently people moved in from outside the local community.

Mrs Amesbury suggested that the way forward may be by the use of Section 106 Agreements built into planning permissions – to ensure housing went to people with a “local connection”. It was noted that the Parish Council would wish to be involved and negotiate the criteria in respect of this local connection.

Mrs Amesbury **AGREED** to discuss the possibilities of Section 106 Agreements and the concerns raised at a meeting with colleagues at Chester City Council

where she worked and bring a report to the next meeting on how the Parish and City Council could work in partnership to provide the necessary low cost housing.

The meeting recognised that there was still a lot of work to be done to provide some affordable housing to meet the needs of local people, although there was currently planning permission to build 12 units on land off Lodge Lane. This site was currently Chester City Council's preferred option within the village.

(f) Supporting Local Shops and Businesses

The meeting was aware of the importance of supporting local shops and businesses. This was a vital component in providing local employment and helping villages to thrive. It was noted that a vast number of the residents of Saughall used the village as a "dormitory" – a place to sleep only. Some people did not use the village's facilities at all.

The meeting considered how it could encourage local people to use local shops and businesses. It was suggested that successes elsewhere be investigated and best practice shared and environmental and healthy living factors associated with not using the car and walking to school etc. be given detailed consideration. Mrs Amesbury **AGREED** to ascertain which officer(s) within the Principal Authorities could offer advice and be of help on these issues. It was also **AGREED** that the possibility of holding a Farmer's Market in the village be explored.

(g) Youth Provision

It was suggested that it might be possible to fund a detached youth worker who actually worked on the street. A lot of youngsters were not "clubbable" and did not like structured activity, preferring to hang out with friends on street corners instead.

The meeting **AGREED** that it would be appropriate to share best practice with those areas who had made appropriate youth provision e.g. BMX track, skate boarding circuit, youth shelter.

It was reported that the Saughall Youth Club currently catered for youngsters between the ages of 10 and 14. Another night may be needed for the older children or alternatively youth shelter provision may be the answer. A survey was needed to find out what the older youth of the village would prefer.

(h) Police Presence/Community Safety

The meeting **AGREED** that it was imperative that there was good communications between the Cheshire Constabulary and community leaders. It was vital that there was a good working relationship and regular dialogue with the Police, the Homewatch and the Parish Council. Community safety was a vital element of any Parish Plan. By working together in partnership the quality of life of residents in Saughall could be greatly improved. This approach would ensure increased involvement, consultation and co-operation between each party.

It was also **AGREED** that Chief Inspector Dave Hill, a resident of Saughall, be invited to join the Steering Group.

(i) The Needs of Older People

Mr Southey **AGREED** to feedback to the next meeting the views of older people in the village on what provision they would like to see made in the Parish Plan for them.

6 INVOLVING THE VILLAGE – CONSULTATION AND OWNERSHIP OF THE PLAN

The meeting turned its attention to how it could get the whole of the village involved in the compilation of the Parish Plan. It was **AGREED** that to stimulate activity, generate ideas, capture imagination and hold people's attention, consultation needed to be a little more exciting than the usual method of a "boring questionnaire". Communication was most definitely a two way process. Therefore information should be free flowing and shared.

A "Planning for a Real" exercise was suggested as one way of holding people's attention, along with a Suggestion Week, Suggestion Boxes in shops, schools and churches and a Suggestion Wall.

7 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting of the Parish Plan Steering Group would be held at 7:30pm on Wednesday, 30 October 2002 in a venue to be decided.