

MINUTES OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK'S PARISH MEETING held on 19 May 2003 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)
Councillor Mrs J Johnson
Councillor B Kerr
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor C Wynne-Eyton
Councillor Mrs M Wynne-Eyton
Councillor Mrs J Young

Mr C McIlwrick – Homewatch Chairman
and 9 Parishioners as recorded in the attendance register

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
Councillor A Marsden
Councillor C Moss
Councillor Mrs D Whitton

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of Saughall and Shotwick Park's Parish Meeting held on 22 April 2002 be confirmed as a correct record.

3 CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman welcomed Parishioners to their Annual Assembly and then presented his Annual Report setting out the Council's achievements and successes over the last twelve months. He detailed ongoing initiatives and the Council's aims and aspirations for the future.

Various issues were highlighted and considered in detail, these included:

(a) e-government

By 2005 the Government wanted more emphasis on e-mail distribution and all Government services available across the Internet. This Council was working towards this. It had had a website for the past two years, it continued to evolve and was regularly updated and improved to meet both the Council's and its electorate's needs. It contained Council, Committee and Panel Minutes that could, along with the rest of its contents, be searched using the search facility. It was an invaluable tool that promoted the village and was easy to read and use.

Broadband was available to about 60% of Chester homes and businesses. Unfortunately, it was not available at all in Saughall.

Without broadband, the Internet could not live up to its full potential. Broadband was a fast, always on, Internet connection. Broadband would open up new possibilities for gaming, entertainment, education and home working. For businesses it would provide fast communications with customers and suppliers, creating new opportunities for e-commerce.

A campaign was underway to get British Telecom to upgrade the local telephone exchanges to allow Saughall residents broadband access. The Council's website, www.saughall.gov.uk, had direct links to register for broadband on its front page.

(b) Golden Jubilee Park

The Council continued to work towards the development of a Golden Jubilee Park on its land on Fiddlers Lane.

Much progress had been made. There had been many obstacles to negotiate but the Council was now in a position to submit a planning application for Change of Use of its land on Fiddlers Lane, adjacent to the Swing Park, from agricultural to recreational. This followed a number of meetings with Chester City Council's Planning Officers, a survey of the pond and hedge that ascertained the existence of Great Crested Newts, and advice from the Environment Agency on culverting the ditch that runs between the two pieces of land in the Council's ownership on Fiddlers Lane.

A detailed specification had been drawn up along with a site layout and the Council would invite tenders from a select list of contractors shortly.

The development was highly dependant on grant aid to carry out the work necessary. The Council had been successful in attracting approximately £4,000 so far. It had a number of partners, including the Cricket Club, and Colts, who could apply for grants in their own right. The Council also had other funding options to explore and a new financial year would bring new opportunities.

This was a major project for a Parish Council to take on. It would take many thousands of pounds to complete and anyone with experience in putting funding bids together was requested to assist the Council in attracting finance.

(c) Parish Plan

The Council had been successful in obtaining a grant of £5,000 from the Countryside Agency to compile a Parish Plan. It now had 12 months to undertake the work required and publish the Plan.

There were six key areas identified for specific attention and Focus Groups were being established to take forward each one.

(d) Affordable Housing

Chester City Council had carried out a Housing Needs Survey. As a result it had identified that 66 new homes were required in Saughall and 16 should be affordable and assist people to get onto the “property ladder”.

The Parish Council had been in negotiation with Cheshire County Council to allow a housing association to purchase some of its land (County Farms Estate) so it could build some affordable housing. The situation was currently being reviewed and the Parish Council was actively looking for alternative sites.

(e) Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School – Road Crossing

The Parish Council considered that traffic was travelling too fast up and down Church Road. Consequently, it had been lobbying for a crossing to allow school children and local residents to cross the road safely. Unfortunately, Cheshire County Council’s Highway Engineers had informed that it would not be possible to have a crossing because none of the criteria for one were met.

The Council was now lobbying for a reduction in the speed limit.

(f) Parish Council Surgeries

The Council continued to hold a weekly Parish Council Surgery on a Saturday between 10:00am and 10:45am in the Parish Room on Fiddlers Lane.

(g) Quality Parish Council Initiative

The Parish Council had registered its intention to seek ‘Quality’ Parish Council status. Once accredited the Council hoped to have more ownership of functions and services being delivered.

To achieve Quality status the Council must meet robust tests of its competence that covered the following:

- ?? Electoral Mandate
- ?? Qualifications of the Clerk
- ?? Council Meetings
- ?? Communications
- ?? Annual Report
- ?? Accounts
- ?? Code of Conduct

Then the Parish Council could enter into negotiations with Cheshire County and Chester City Councils over the devolution of functions and services to it, e.g. nuisance abatement, development control, aspects of management of libraries, street lighting and parking restrictions. The Council also wanted to negotiate with the two Principal Authorities to promote partnership working.

When the Parish Council had achieved Quality status it was thought that it would be in a position to give Saughall and Shotwick Park a better deal on local services and a stronger voice in decisions affecting people’s day-to-day lives.

(h) Parish Paths Warden

The Council wanted to upgrade all the paths in the Parish for the pleasure of everyone in Saughall. The Parish Paths Warden, Mr Tony Leach, had contacted the County Council's Rights of Way Section about various maintenance work that was required and work was being carried out as a result of his efforts.

(i) New Bus Shelters

The Council had been successful in attracting a grant of £3,800 from the Countryside Agency to assist the Bus Shelter project. This was a joint enterprise in partnership with Cheshire County Council. The Parish Council's contribution of £1,000 for each shelter was being offset by the funding contribution. The County Council paid the difference between this and the total cost of each shelter. Two shelters were already in place on Church Road and the Ridings and the other two would be erected on Hermitage Road.

The Parish Council also contributed £250 per shelter annually to the shelter's maintenance. Unfortunately, there had been some vandalism and the panes of glass were being smashed regularly. Anyone seeing the glass being broken was requested to report it to Chester Police Station on 01244 350222 and to ask for an incident number.

(j) Policing in Saughall

The Parish Council was very frustrated with the responses local residents had been receiving from the Cheshire Constabulary. There seemed little correlation between the numbers of incidents being reported by Saughall residents and the number of incidents recorded by the Constabulary. Although the Council had concerns it had been promised that there would be an improvement.

Project Rural Matters, a community safety initiative, was ongoing and involved police officers working overtime, on their rest days. It aimed to promote and include wider community involvement in addressing issues of community safety throughout the rural area of Chester. It appeared to have had a number of successes in achieving its objectives during 2002 and was continuing in 2003 under the guidance of a steering group and with input from the Gowy North Area Committee.

4 QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Members of the public raised the following issues:

(1) Ball Games

The Council had received a letter from residents of Darlington Crescent who complained about being disturbed regularly by local youths, well over the age of ten, playing football directly behind their properties until late at night.

The major annoyance was that the residents' boundary fences were deliberately being used to rebound the football and this made a lot of noise and caused damage. These children were also using bad language.

One of the residents had reported the problems being experienced to a Police Sergeant who informed that the Police would not enforce the byelaw!

The residents requested the assistance of the Parish Council and the Rural Police Constable, Gareth Cooper, to encourage children to play their ball games away from their boundary fences.

The Chairman informed that the Cheshire Constabulary should enforce the byelaw. It was **AGREED** that the resident's letter would be forwarded to Inspector Williams, who was in charge of the Rural Section, for action.

As the facilities improved on Fiddlers Lane it was hoped that the local children would be encouraged to use them.

(2) Grass Cutting on Grassed Amenity Areas

There was disagreement between the residents over how often the grass should be cut. There were two schools of thought. Some residents considered the grass should be left long to deter ball games whilst others considered it should be kept short and tidy.

It was noted that Chester City Council's contractors were responsible for maintaining the grassed areas.

(3) No 28 Bus

Some residents wanted to know why the No 28 Bus route did not include the Greyhound Estate. People without cars were unable to get to the shops on this estate.

An approach had been made to Chester City Transport. However, it was adamant that it would not re-route the No 28 Bus.

(4) Junction of Long Lane and Parkgate Road

There had been an accident at the top of Long Lane recently. There was a lot of greenery at the junction and it was requested that the Tree Warden make arrangements to cut it back.

The Tree Warden **AGREED** to make a site visit and take any remedial action he considered appropriate.

A resident wanted to know if the speed limit on the Parkgate Road could be reduced from 50mph to 30mph.

The Chairman informed that the speed limit could not be reduced and the Council was looking at options to improve the junction so it would be more visible.

(5) Housing Allocation

It was reported that the allocation of corporation housing in the village was often perceived as unfair because local people were often unable to secure housing and had to move away from the village to obtain accommodation. The points system used seemed to work against them.

The Chairman **AGREED** to discuss this problem with Chester City Council and the Chester and District Housing Trust.

(6) Parked Cars on Church Road

It was reported that at times, Church Road was difficult to negotiate because of the number of cars that were parked on the side of the road.

The Chairman informed that so long as the cars were not creating an unlawful obstruction they were the best form of traffic calming there was.

(7) Golden Jubilee Park

Residents wanted to know how much it would cost to develop the Golden Jubilee Park.

The Chairman informed that the tender specifications were still being worked up so the cost was not known. The Council would be going out to tender.

It was hoped that the costs of the development could be met by grant aid. It was also reported that the costs of running the facilities would be met by the sporting organisations that would use them.

Residents also wanted to know if there were any plans to have a tennis court on the development. They were told that this was not in the site layout.

There was no room on the site for a tennis court but if the Parish Plan Focus Groups identified a need for one the Council could consider the purchase of additional land on which to site a court. There was to be a basketball court in the Golden Jubilee Park and this could also be marked out as a tennis court.

The Council was asked if it intended to allow the use of the land prior to it being developed?

The Chairman reported that the Council, as the owner of the land, owed a duty of care and had put up signs to keep people out. The Council could not get insurance for people to use it in its current state. The Council would be liable for any accidents and this was a risk it could not afford and was not prepared to take.

5 PARISH PLAN

Those residents in attendance were asked if they would like to sit on any of the Focus Groups that were being established to assist the Parish planning process. They were:

- ? Golden Jubilee Park
- ? Community Safety
- ? Commerce and Business
- ? Youth Issues
- ? 50+
- ? Community Halls

These Groups would be responsible for drawing up questions for inclusion in a questionnaire that would be sent to every household in the village for completion. The findings of this Community Survey would establish what local residents would like to see in the village over the next 10-15 years.

Those residents who were interested, agreed to provide their names and choice of Group(s) to the Clerk.

6 VOTE OF THANKS

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and the Members of the Council for their efforts over the last year. He also thanked Members for their support during his first year as Chairman.

The Chairman also offered congratulations and best wishes for the future to Councillors C and Mrs M Wynne-Eyton who had married recently in Scotland.