

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on 24 April 2003 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 RA Storrar  
Councillor A Warrington

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor B Kerr

28 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

29 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 February 2003 be confirmed as a correct record.

30 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

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

31 GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK

The Clerk reported that Councillors Kerr and Moss and Mr D Bird had met with Mr R Easby of the Cheshire County Playing Fields Association and had together assisted the drawing up of the necessary tender documentation. There were still some gaps and Councillor Kerr was examining various possibilities. The Clerk had also been advised to send letters to those who had tendered previously thanking them for their interest and explaining why their 'design and build' schemes had been abandoned.

Members raised concerns that leisure provision was focused more on the younger element and that perhaps more could be done to cater for the more mature parishioners. Although a bowling green had been incorporated in the draft layout it was not expected to be in the first phase of the development.

Space was limited and Members agreed that a decision would need to be made sooner rather than later on whether to incorporate within the layout a practice bowling green or an appropriate sized one so that matches could be played. This decision obviously had implications for the rest of the layout and the size of the three football pitches.

Council be **RECOMMENDED** to give further consideration to facilities being provided for older people in the Golden Jubilee Park and particularly to the inclusion of an adequately sized bowling green.

The Chairman informed that following the meeting of the Parish Plan Steering Group held the previous evening, four items of urgent business would be given consideration so that recommendations could be made to the next meeting of the Council scheduled for Tuesday, 20 May 2003. They were as follows:

(a) Third Party Liability Insurance

The Parish Council was concerned about the problems associated with obtaining third party liability insurance and the costs involved. Other Parish Councils had similar concerns.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Cheshire County Playing Fields Association insurance issues had been discussed and it had been suggested that perhaps the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils could launch a campaign on its members behalf with a view to obtaining the necessary blanket cover for Parish Councils at acceptable rates.

Council be **RECOMMENDED** to consider the appropriateness of requesting the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils to take the action proposed above.

(b) Parish Plan

The Chairman reported that the Council had been successful in its bid to the Countryside Agency for a £5,000 grant to compile a Parish Plan and that an interim payment of £2,500 had already been received. Work now started in earnest to publish the plan within the strict timescales laid down.

The next step had been to form a number of Focus Groups who's purpose would be to assist the Parish Plan Steering Group (Committee) to prepare an Action Plan for the community.

At first glance, the Council had previously decided to establish 3 Focus Groups. However, as a result of the previous evening's meeting, for good reasons, the Parish Plan Steering Group had proposed that six Focus Groups be established as follows:

**Golden Jubilee Park**  
(Councillor Mrs JE Storrar)

**Community Safety**  
(Miss Samantha Brooks & Messers J Hallas & G Southey)

**Commerce and Business**  
(Councillors A Bailey, A Marsden, C Moss & R Shukla)

**Youth Issues**  
(Councillor RA Storrar)

**50+**  
(Councillors A Bailey & B Kerr)

**Community Halls**  
(Councillor A Warrington)

These Focus Groups would each tackle a specific issue, or set of issues, or the needs and opportunities facing a specific group of people within the community.

Mr Peter Webb, Parish Plans Development Officer, Cheshire Community Council had been appointed Project Officer and he had provided very informative presentations on his “desktop research”, latest advice received from the Countryside Agency, the way forward and targets to be met. He also expressed an interest in attending as many Focus Group meetings as he could. It was hoped that a questionnaire could be distributed to parishioners in September 2003.

Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

- (1) to establish the six Focus Groups as set out above; and
- (2) to agree their full membership, including necessary co-options, at the Annual Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 20 May 2003, taking account of the provisional nominations made by Members of this Committee and the Parish Plan Steering Group, as listed under the proposed name of each Focus Group.

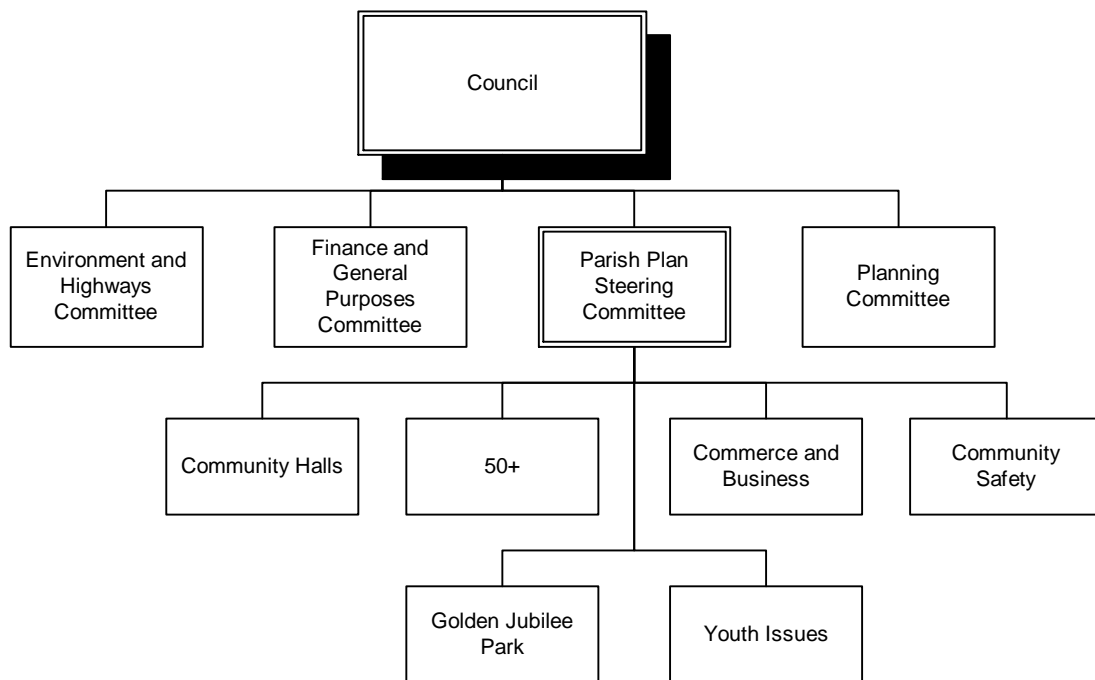
(c) Committee Restructuring

In the light of (b) above the Chairman informed that it was appropriate to have initial regard to the structure of the Council’s Committee system for the next Municipal Year.

Members deliberated at length and discussed the possibility of establishing an Amenities Forum once the Parish Plan had been published, made up of those members of the community who had served on the Focus Groups.

Members also had regard to the present length of Council agendas and the new initiatives coming on stream including Quality Parish Council status that would require considerable debate and take up the Council’s time.

Council be **RECOMMENDED** to adopt the following Committee structure:



(d) June Council Meeting

Council be **RECOMMENDED** to hold its June meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> as the Annual Meeting is not until 20 May 2003.

33 CHESTER CITY COUNCIL'S AREA COMMITTEES

Councillor RA Storrar reported that the new Area Committees had now been established to ensure that local people could participate in Chester City Council's decision making and policy processes.

The emphasis was on listening and devolving Town Hall powers to enable ward Councillors to make decisions locally in consultation with their communities. Saughall was one of the villages that came under the Gowy North Area Committee along with Barrow, Christleton, Elton, Kelsall, Mickle Trafford, Mollington, Tarvin and Waverton.

Each Area Committee had its own budget that would be used to grant aid various local initiatives and even though Saughall had been successful in attracting £3,200 in the previous financial year from the former Local Panel 7 it was important to submit a bid as early as possible for the Golden Jubilee Park development, as it was a major project and would take many thousands of pounds to complete it.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Clerk be requested to contact Ms Anne Lancaster, the Area Committee Manager (Rural Wards), for information on how to make applications for funding to the Gowy North Area Committee.

Mrs Jackie Weaver, the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Council's Chief Officer, had written to the Clerk to advise on the progress her organisation had made in respect of the motions the Council had put to the 2002 Annual Meeting.

Motion 1 had been amended at the meeting and now read as follows:

“In view of the enhanced role and added responsibility Quality Parish Council status will bring, this Council calls on the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils to enter into dialogue and make appropriate representations in appropriate quarters.”

The principle of the motion had been very much foremost in the consideration of the Quality Parish Council Charter that the Association was currently working on. In addition the motion had been drawn to the attention of NALC who responded as follows:

“...(NALC) will continue to press for strict provision within the final guidance and regulations concerning relations between the tiers, most importantly in view of political devolution of functions and the issue of charters and enforcement.”

Mrs Weaver also informed that further progress would be made on the Cheshire Quality Parish Council Charter when guidance on the Strategy had been received in May and member Parish Councils would be kept fully apprised of progress made.

Motion 2 had been amended at the meeting and read as follows:

“This Council calls on the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils to lobby support and make appropriate representations with a view to bringing about change to Rating Legislation so that local council's premises are no longer subject to Business Rates, but are subject to whatever rating levy is appropriate to the use of the buildings/premises.”

Mrs Weaver informed that on the face of it this appeared to be a problem specific to this Parish Council and suggested that the Council should discuss the matter again with the Rating Officer to ensure that there was not a simple misunderstanding. In the meantime, the Association was writing to each of the District Rating Offices requesting a formal statement of their policy in this regard. If the response indicated any discrimination on behalf of the District Council she would contact the Clerk immediately.

Motion 3

“This Council calls on the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils to open joint discussion with the Cheshire Constabulary with a view to agreeing a joint statement which sets out a series of principles to characterise effective working relationships between local councils and the Constabulary. (Along the lines of the Cheshire Local Council's Charter agreed between Cheshire County Council and the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils.)”

Mrs Weaver informed that as a result of drawing this motion to the attention of the Chief Constable, a meeting had been arranged between him, the Assistant Chief Constable, the County Chairman and the Chief Officer at which this could be further explored.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) in respect of Motion 1, the Clerk be requested to ask Mrs Weaver for a progress report in May 2003 when the guidance is received;
- (2) in respect of Motion 2, the Clerk be requested to:
  - (a) inform Mrs Weaver that the Council is not entirely happy with her response;
  - (b) inform that varied attempts have been made to discuss the matter with the Rating Office and that no misunderstandings have occurred;
  - (c) request that support is given to the Council; and
  - (d) request a copy of the District Rating Office's response.
- (3) in respect of Motion 3, the Clerk be requested to ascertain from Mrs Weaver whether or not the meeting with senior Police Officers has taken place and if so obtain an account of the proceedings, conclusions and next steps.

#### 34 SAUGHALL POLICING

The Chairman reported that there had been no developments in respect of policing issues since his report to the last meeting of the Council on 7 April 2003.

Councillor Mrs JE Storrar had toured the village with PC Gareth Cooper one Sunday afternoon visiting trouble spots. Later in the evening there had been the inevitable problems in Meadows Lane and they had been reported to the police. It was not known if they had responded.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

#### 35 SAUGHALL PLAYGROUP

No formal request for grant aid to assist the capital costs of a new mobile unit had been received.

Members were unable to make any recommendations to Council as they did not know the total cost of the scheme, whether funding was needed in this financial year or the next one, or the timescales involved.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor RA Storrar be requested to inform the Playgroup that the Council would give serious consideration to making a financial contribution to the project on receipt of a formal application setting out appropriate details.

36 NEWSLETTER

The Committee gave consideration to its next newsletter that would be issued in May 2003. It had regard to quotations for printing the newsletters and considered items for inclusion.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Council continue to use Chester City Council's Print Unit for production of its newsletters and that it be on coloured paper; and
- (2) the following items be included in the next newsletter:

- Information on the Annual Assembly
- Broadband Campaign
- Area Committees
- Parish Plan
- Quality Parish Council Status
- Project Rural Matters
- Portable Speed Signs
- Footpath Warden
- Tree Warden
- Daffodil display
- Saughall Youth Project