

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE held on 23 March 2006 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor B Kerr (in the Chair)
Councillor R Shukla
Councillor Mrs H Thorniley-Jones
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor Mrs M Wynne-Eyton
Councillor Mrs J Young

Invited Guests: Mr M Bell
Mr G Edwards
Mrs H Cakebread
Mr DJ Francis

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor A Warrington.

14 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs H Thorniley-Jones declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5(b) - . Proposal to Incorporate a Full Size Football Pitch in the Golden Jubilee Park. The new Greyhound Football Team wanted to use this facility and she was the landlady at the Greyhound Public House.

15 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 January 2006 were **AGREED** as a correct record.

16 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute No 28/2005 – Newsletter

The Chairman informed that he had recently looked back over the Minutes and had noted that at the meeting of the Committee held on 24 March 2005 it had been **AGREED** that the former Chairman would edit the Newsletter and Councillor Mrs JE Storrar would be sub-editor.

The Chairman told the meeting that he did not agree with that decision and considered it was the Clerk's job to produce the Newsletter. The next Newsletter would be produced in May/June 2006 and would consist of the Chairman's Annual Report that he would present at the Annual Assembly and details of the new Council, elected in May.

Minute No 29/2005 – Vernon Institute Clock

It was **AGREED** that Councillor Mrs H Thorniley-Jones would speak to Mr Robert Murphy to ascertain whether or not his work on the clock had been completed and to request that an invoice be sent to the Clerk. Hopefully the work would be completed and the invoice paid before the end of the financial year.

Minute No 9/2006 – Village Directory

It was **AGREED** that the Village Directory would take the form of a “living document” and would be available on the Internet. However, hard copies would be available, free of charge, from outlets in the village e.g. Parish Surgery, the Greyhound Pub, Pharmacy, Post Office, etc.

Minute No 10/2006 – Annual Play Area Inspection Report – Jubilee Field, Saughall

The Chairman reported that all actions, as a result of the findings following the Annual Inspection, had been taken or were ongoing.

17 GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK DEVELOPMENT

(a) Work Required and Timescale

The Clerk emphasised that no work would be carried out until the Council was informed whether or not its loan application to the Public Works Loan Board had been successful.

Once the overhead electric cables were buried in the ground, Mr Francis would excavate the cricket square. The Cricket Club would then bring in its contractor to put hard core down and then Mr Francis would start development work on the field.

(b) Overhead Electric Cables

It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would write again to Powersystems informing that the Council’s contractor would be on-site from 1 May 2006 and that the overhead cables must be removed and put underground by then. Failure to do so would mean the Council would incur penalties as its contractor would not be able to start work. The Clerk would also try to ascertain how long the work would take and inform that it was expected that Powersystems would make good and drainage work it disturbed.

(c) Football Pitch

Mr M Bell requested the Committee to consider including a full size football pitch in the Golden Jubilee Park development. A new football club had been formed in the village. It would play on a Sunday in the Chester League and needed a pitch on which to play its home games. The goalposts would be removed after games.

It was **AGREED** in principle that the new football club would be accommodated in the Park. The next step would be for the preferred contractor, the project co-ordinator, representatives of both the football and cricket clubs and the Parish Council to meet on the field and mark out where the football pitch would go so that it did not encroach on the cricket square. It was also **AGREED** that if the perimeter path required realignment as a result of the football pitch further discussions would be held and the cost implications considered.

The Chairman **AGREED** to act as co-ordinator in the absence of the project co-ordinator and set up the meeting to mark out the pitch.

If the football pitch generated any extra costs it would be necessary for the football club or a third party to pick them up. Mr Francis told the meeting that he did not envisage any problems with the drainage of the field. He considered that it was adequate to meet all requirements.

It was expected that the football club would play, on average, 20 matches per season and would work with the cricket club to ensure that there were no match clashes.

(d) Environmental Project

Mrs H Cakebread informed that there was a good variation on the site. To improve the new pond the Council would need to introduce plants but not alien stock. She considered that it was better to do nothing than to introduce the wrong type of plants and make a big mistake. She recommended that the new pond be not disturbed for the immediate future. It would be good to have some long grass as this would encourage wildlife.

Mrs Cakebread recommended that a long term plan be drawn up to encourage the Great Crested Newts to stay. She **AGREED** to draw this up and to act as the Parish Council's Environmental Warden. She would monitor the project and from time to time bring issues to the Council's attention.

(e) Moles

It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would let a contract to get rid of the moles to Mr David Oldfield in the sum of £150 over a three month period. Further visits after that would cost £50 a time.

(f) Car Parking

It was **AGREED** that in view of the addition of a football pitch in the Golden Jubilee Park, car parking provision and implications would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

18 STREET CLEANING AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

(a) Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council

The Chairman had met with Mr Colin Bailey of Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council on 10 March 2006. They had held very amicable discussions and agreed an end date to the current contracts of 19 May 2006.

Mr Bailey was sympathetic to assisting the Council if it encountered any problems placing a successor contract for street cleaning. He would present a contingency paper to his Committee seeking approval for an interim arrangement post 19 May and in a worse case scenario to continue to provide that service until the end of

March 2007 at an inflation adjusted price. He declined the opportunity to take on odd jobs.

(b) Street Cleaning/De-littering

The Clerk reported that no tenders had been received for the street cleaning work.

Members expressed surprise that Chester City Council had not tendered because its Parks and Open Spaces Officer had informed that it had been decided that it would.

It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would:

- (1) clarify whether or not Chester City Council wanted to tender for the work;
- (2) inform Mr Colin Bailey that the Council had not received any tenders for street cleaning and would probably require his Council to continue to provide this service after 19 May 2006 if his Committee was agreeable whilst the Parish Council tried to find an alternative contractor; and
- (3) ask neighbouring Parish Clerks what arrangements they had in place for street cleaning/de-littering.

(c) Grounds Maintenance

The Clerk reported that only one tender had been received in respect of grounds maintenance. It was from All Cheshire Garden Services and the details were as follows:

Fiddlers Lane Playing Field
Weekly grass cutting and play equipment inspection - £120
Hedge trimming 2/3 times a year - £160 per cut

It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would accept the tender detailed above and the contract would be let from 22 May 2006 until 21 May 2010.

It was also **AGREED** that the Clerk would ask for a further quotation to trim the hedge on the road side of the land under development at the same time as the other hedge was cut.

19 HOMEWATCH – THE WAY FORWARD

The Committee considered the way forward for the Homewatch and was hopeful that a new Co-ordinator would come forward.

20 GOWY NORTH AREA COMMITTEE – GRANT APPLICATION

The Committee considered the application form for funding from the Area Committee. Funding bids had to be submitted by 21 April 2006.

It was **AGREED** to invite the Cricket Club and the newly formed Football Club to submit a joint funding application for work they would require in the Golden Jubilee Park. The Chairman **AGREED** to speak to both parties about this proposal.

21 PROPOSED MERGER OF CHESHIRE AND MERSEYSIDE POLICE

The Committee noted that the Home Secretary had now given notice that he proposed to make an Order amalgamating the Cheshire and Merseyside Police area with effect from 1 April 2007. It appeared that the Home Secretary in seeking to impose this amalgamation through Parliamentary process was limiting the statutory consultation necessary to the relevant police authorities and the principal councils in those areas. The Cheshire Police Authority was seeking to broaden that consultation to ensure that all key stakeholders in Cheshire had a say on this fundamental change to the structure of policing in this area.

The Police Authority had met on 21 February 2006 to formally consider the Home Secretary's decision and Members were provided with a copy of its report and subsequent resolution.

It was noted that the Police Authority considered that there was insufficient information from the Home Office to enable it to 'volunteer' to merge. There was no evidence that the Home Secretary's decision would provide a more effective and efficient police service. Particular concerns expressed relate to finance; council tax equalisation; and reassurance that any increased capability to deal with serious crime would not merely be focused in Merseyside to deal with serious threats there.

There was a real concern that existing police resources in our neighbourhoods could be redeployed into Merseyside and that local Council taxpayers may be asked to pay more for what may well be a reduced service at the neighbourhood level.

The Parish Council was asked to give this matter serious consideration and pass an appropriate Motion for forwarding to the Home Secretary so that both he and Parliament knew the strength of feeling within Cheshire on this matter, before the final Order was placed before the House for approval. Objections to the Home Secretary's merger should be delivered to the Home Office by 2 July 2006.

The Committee deliberated this matter at length and **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** Council to support the Cheshire Police Authority's opposition to the merger. Members believed that such a merger would increase the Council Tax burden on Cheshire Taxpayers and considered that the Cheshire Constabulary was more conducive to policing rural areas.

Members had been circulated with a copy of the Chairman of the Cheshire Police Authority, Councillor Peter Nurse's letter dated 9 February 2005 to the Home Secretary, Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP requesting a more modern bespoke arrangement for delivering effective policing services for this region and informing that the result of his proposals would be no change and the same problems as what the Authority had now and level 2 crime would not be dealt with anymore effectively. They **AGREED** with the contents of the letter and wished to support Councillor Nurse's views.

22 CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT FOR PLANNING MATTERS, UNDER REGULATION 28 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (LOCAL DEVELOPMENT) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2004 NOTIFICATION – SUBMISSION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The consultation ran from 21 March to 2 May 2006. The Committee agreed not to respond.

23 PRINTER

The Clerk reported that the Council's printer was in need of replacement. It was making loud noises and the paper was constantly jamming.

It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would purchase a new printer at a cost not to exceed £500, excluding VAT.

24 PARISH ASSEMBLY AND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

(a) Parish Assembly

It was reported that the Vernon Institute Booking Secretary had indicated that the Annual Assembly could not be accommodated at the Vernon Institute on Wednesday, 19 April 2006 as all rooms were booked. The Clerk had made a booking some time ago but the Secretary had said she had no record of it.

It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would seek an alternative venue and if that was not possible the Annual Assembly would be rescheduled to a date when a room was available at the Vernon Institute.

(b) Annual Meeting

The Clerk informed that the Annual Council meeting scheduled for Monday, 8 May 2006 was very close to the election and that this might cause difficulties as agendas could not be distributed to Members until it was known who the Members were and would leave very little time for them to read the documentation in advance of the meeting.

It was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Council that the date of its Annual Council meeting be rescheduled to 15 May 2006.