

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on 16 April 2007 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs J Johnson  
Councillor RA Storrar  
Councillor Mrs H Thorniley-Jones  
Councillor A Warrington  
Councillor Mrs J Young (in the Chair)

Invited Members: Councillor WI Humphrey  
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey

Also in attendance: Mr RS Drummond-Hay, Northern Affordable Homes Ltd  
Mr I Gould, County Property Manager, Cheshire County Council  
Mr S Kalaher, Saughall Colts  
Inspector S Pengelly, Cheshire Constabulary  
Ms H White, Senior Regeneration Officer, Chester City Council

10 APOLOGIES FOR AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Apologies for authorised absence were received from Councillors DF Holman, JG Johnson, B Kerr, C Moss, R Shukla, Mrs JE Storrar and Mrs D Whitton. Apologies were also received from Sergeant Mark Houghton.

11 CODE OF CONDUCT

No Declarations of Interest were received.

12 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 March 2007 be confirmed as a correct record.

13 AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN SAUGHALL

Councillor Kerr had approached Mr RS Drummond-Hay of Northern Affordable Homes Ltd to find out if his company was able to assist the Parish Council with its ambition to have an affordable housing project in Saughall to serve local needs.

There was a piece of land in Saughall, an “exceptions site” in the Green Belt, currently in the ownership of Cheshire County Council with planning consent for an affordable housing scheme. Unfortunately, the applicant, Arena (a housing association), had not made any progress because of financial constraints.

Both Messrs Drummond-Hay and Gould (the County Property Manager) along with Ms White (Senior Regeneration Officer, Chester City Council) were in attendance at the meeting to discuss the possibility of building affordable homes in the village with Mr Drummond-Hay and the Parish Council.

Mr Drummond-Hay made a presentation that included information on the following:

- Northern Affordable Homes Ltd
- What is affordable housing?
- Broad intermediate housing market
- Successful affordable housing schemes in Kirkby Lonsdale
- Possibility of an affordable housing scheme in Saughall and arrangements that could be put in place

It was noted that Northern Affordable Homes Ltd was a profit making organisation that specialised in building affordable rural houses. They only built houses where there was a motive to do so and the cost of an average 2 bedroom house was approximately £85,000.

Following the presentation Members asked a number of questions that were answered by Mr Drummond-Hay.

Ms White was very supportive of the proposal as it appeared to be broadly in line with Chester City Council's regeneration policy. She informed that the detailed proposal, once worked up, would need to be checked and agreed.

Mr Gould informed that the site earmarked for affordable housing, to the North of Lodge Lane, was still available and would not be affected by the proposal to amalgamate Saughall's Infant and Junior Schools and provide a new Primary School building on County Council owned land. He also indicated that the County Council was prepared to sell the land needed for an affordable housing scheme at a reasonable price to reflect the scheme to be built. He indicated that there was a deal to be done.

It was considered that any new homes built should be cheap to run and environmentally friendly.

Mr Drummond-Hay was informed that Chester City Council, the Planning Authority, had granted planning permission to Arena but that it had been subject to a Section 106 Agreement that had never been signed. Therefore, planning permission had not been officially confirmed in writing. The Planning Officer, Mr S Lewis, would be able to provide the definitive view. Also, the City Council had a pre-application process and it was advisable for Northern Affordable Homes Ltd to take advantage of this.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the reports and Northern Affordable Homes Ltd interest in taking forward an affordable housing scheme on land to the North of Lodge Lane, Saughall be noted;
- (2) Ms White and Messrs Drummond-Hay and Gould be thanked for their attendance at the meeting; and
- (3) Mr Drummond-Hay be requested to provide feedback in due course on his Company's intentions in respect of the land in Saughall earmarked for a low cost housing scheme.

14 APPLICATION FROM THE SAUGHALL COLTS FOR FUNDING TO CARRY OUT IMPROVEMENTS AND PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FOOTBALL PITCHES ON LAND ON SEAHILL ROAD IN THE OWNERSHIP OF THE VERNON INSTITUTE

Further to the last meeting of the Council held on 2 April 2007 (Public Speaking Time) the Committee gave consideration to a funding request made by Mr S Kalaher on behalf of the Saughall Colts.

Members were aware that the Colts wanted to create 3 junior and 2 mini-soccer pitches as Phase 1 of improvements and increase car parking provision as Phase 2 on land on Seahill Road in the ownership of the Vernon Institute. It was expected that Phase 1 would cost approximately £7,000 and it was noted that the Colts had already been successful in raising £5,000.

Members considered the funding request alongside its budget for the financial year 2007/08. There was currently £3,840 in the savings fund the Council; had established to support improvements to the structure and fabric of the Vernon Institute building.

It was noted that the Colts had not yet made a funding application towards the costs of improvements to its facilities on Seahill Road to Chester City Council's North Gowy Area Committee and there were doubts over whether land in Wales could attract grant aid from an English Local Authority.

An estimate for all of the work required, from contractors All Seasons NW Ltd, was provided for the Clerk.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Clerk be requested to write to the Chairman of the Vernon Institute Management Committee, Mr B Murphy, and ask if his organisation has any objections, in principle, to the Council making a financial contribution using resources it has currently earmarked to assist improvements to the Vernon Institute building;
- (2) the Council be **RECOMMENDED** to consider whether to grant aid the Colts' improvements in the light of the response received from the Vernon Institute Management Committee;
- (3) the Colts be advised to apply for funding to the Anne Powell Trust (administered by the Vicar and All Saints Church Wardens); and
- (4) Mr Kalaher be thanked for his attendance at the meeting.

14 CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON RURAL SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMME – SUCCESSFUL FUNDING APPLICATION TO RUN A NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Council had been successful in securing £10,000 of funding from Cheshire Community Council's Cheshire and Warrington Social and Community Programme (RSCP), Community Safety Challenge to fund the establishment and running of a Neighbourhood Management Team for a period of three years.

The RSCP Community Safety Challenge aimed to create safer rural communities in Cheshire and Warrington. It was currently funding 3 projects, up to £10,000 each.

The Council had committed £11,000 and entered into an agreement with the local Police to develop partnership working towards reducing crime and disorder and increasing the level of public confidence leading to a greater level of reassurance through the provision of a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) dedicated to the parish area.

The Council intended to use this partnership as a catalyst to form a Neighbourhood Management Team with the Police and other partners such as the Cheshire Fire Service, Chester City Council, community volunteers and other suitable agencies.

The plans for the Parish were that the PCSO would roll out and support a new Home and Country Watch Scheme, embark on proactive traffic safety schemes and work with the young people of the Parish to find alternative diversions to ensure reduced anti-social behaviour in the area.

Inspector Sarah Pengelly of the Cheshire Constabulary was in attendance at the meeting to offer advice on how the project could be got off the ground. She informed that the Blacon Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Scheme was an example of best practice and that the Saughall Neighbourhood Management Team could choose to operate along similar lines. It was all about getting the right people together to solve problems and making an impact on the local community so that people's fears of crime would diminish. Some survey work would be necessary in order to gauge people's feelings. It was noted that if evidence was produced to show that there was a real fear of crime within the local community the Police would then have a legal obligation to take action.

Members considered that the Neighbourhood Management Team could be made up of Parish Councillors, some of whom were involved with other organisations in the village. Also, any other parishioners who were interested should be invited to be a member of the Team.

There were concerns raised about outputs and the need to undertake regular consultations. Also, Members were not happy that the bid included a payment of £2,500 per annum for the Team's Co-ordinator.

Members informed Inspector Pengelly of problems at the Youth Club and that consequently, there was a need for the PCSO to be in attendance at the beginning of the evening to stop any trouble. Unfortunately, because of the PCSO's shift patterns this had not been possible. The Inspector agreed to look at this problem and try to find a solution.

RESOLVED: That

(1) further consideration be given to the establishment of the Neighbourhood Management Team at the next meeting of the Council;

- (2) Inspector S Pengelly be requested to obtain a copy of the job description and personal specification of the Blacon Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Scheme Co-ordinator;
- (3) Council be **RECOMMENDED** to give further consideration on how the Neighbourhood Management Team should be constituted and on its terms of reference; and
- (4) Inspector Pengelly be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.

## 15 INSURANCE

The Clerk reported that she had written to Zurich Insurance on 2 April 2007 requesting a quotation so that it could be compared with the quotation already received from Cornhill and a decision made. Unfortunately, she had been informed that this was a busy time of the year as most Parish Councils were currently renewing their cover and a timescale for receipt of the requested quote could not be given. The Clerk was concerned that if there was a delay the Council could end up with no insurance cover at all. Appropriate insurance cover had to be in place and paid for by 1 June 2007.

RESOLVED:

That if a quotation from Zurich Insurance has not been received by the date of the Annual Meeting of the Council insurance cover with Cornhill be renewed for a further year and once the requested quotation is received a decision be made on whether to take out a policy with Zurich from 1 June 2008.

## 16 YOUTH POD/SHELTER

The Clerk reported that although she had asked Ms A Thwaite of Chester City Council twice to provide guidance notes on the siting of a youth pod/shelter no guidance had been forthcoming.

Members considered that before any recommendations could be made regarding the proposal to obtain and locate a youth pod/shelter in the village, information should be obtained from the Respect Programme that was currently being run in Chester, Warrington and Halton by the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service for disaffected young people with the aim of reducing anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Council be **RECOMMENDED** to make no decision on the proposal that it acquires and erects a youth pod/shelter in the local area at the current time; and
- (2) arrangements be put in hand for an officer to be invited to a future meeting of the Council to make a presentation on the aims and outcomes of the Respect Programme.

## 17 GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK DEVELOPMENT

The Committee received a report on the proceedings of the meeting of the Field Committee that had been held on 15 April 2007. It was noted that the meeting had been very useful and the siting of the Cricket Club's container to house grounds maintenance equipment had been discussed. Concerns had been raised that Ringwood Fencing had still not put up the fence it was under contract to erect.

It was noted that although the Council's contractor, Mr Des Francis, had been invited to attend the Field Committee he had not turned up. It was reported, however, that one of his employees had sprayed the field on Easter Monday. The Clerk had written to Mr Francis asking him if he could complete his outstanding work by the end of April 2007. Unfortunately, Mr Francis had not responded.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Clerk be requested to contact Ringwood Fencing and obtain a date for the outstanding fencing work to be undertaken; and
- (2) Councillor Mrs J Young be requested to visit Mr Francis and try to ascertain when the outstanding work on the field would be completed.

## 18 APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

The Clerk reported that she had received a letter dated 22 March 2007 from the Audit Commission confirming the appointment of UHY Hacker Young as auditor to the Council for the Financial Year 2006/07.

A tendering exercise would be carried out and a further letter would be sent to the Clerk informing of the auditor for 2007/08 and future years.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

## 19 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS

RESOLVED:

That this matter be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.