

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

In attendance: Councillor DF Holman (in the Chair)
Councillor Mrs J Johnson
Councillor R Shukla
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor Mrs J Young

Invited Members: Councillor Mrs JE Storrar

Also in attendance: Mr P Addison, Rural Housing Enabler
Mr RS Drummond-Hay, Northern Affordable Homes Ltd
Ms H White, Senior Regeneration Officer, Chester City Council

26 APOLOGIES FOR AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Apologies for authorised absence were received from Councillors J Johnson, B Kerr, and Mrs D Whitton.

27 CODE OF CONDUCT

No Declarations of Interest were received.

28 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That subject to Councillor Holman's second initial being amended from G to F, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 June 2007 be confirmed as a correct record.

29 LAND AT LODGE LANE, SAUGHALL

Mr Drummond-Hay informed that the site at Lodge Lane, Saughall was brought to the attention of Northern Affordable Homes by Cheshire County Council. He considered it a suitable site for up to 14 houses. Planning consent was approved a few years ago but it had elapsed. Northern Affordable Homes could come up with a scheme that would not require any outside funding and the houses would be generally affordable:

2 bedroom houses produced for less than £90,000

3 bedroom houses produced for less than £99,000

Some houses would be sold as affordable houses/shared ownership. There would be no outright sales and no right to acquire at all, even in stages. These were houses that were affordable for people just under the average national earnings limit who lived or had connections with the village. The housing would be provided under a legal shared ownership structure. This restricted how much the houses could be sold for and who could buy them. It was proposed that they were made available to people who had lived in the village for at least five years and could not afford to buy a house on the open market. A rigorous checking process would be put in place involving Chester

City Council and the Parish Council. There would also be a model for social rented houses using a local housing association and local people would take priority for a period of 999 years.

It was expected that all houses would be allocated and signed for before the building work commenced.

Ms White informed that there had to be ability in the legal process to allocate wider than the Parish or funding would not be available. Mr Drummond-Hay informed that his company was happy to work with the Parish Council on this and it was proposed that the allocation criteria could be the Saughall Ward.

Mr Drummond-Hay informed that he had agreed broad terms with the County Property Manager. The County Property Manager would not take the proposal forward to his members until he had received feedback from the Parish Council.

Members had a number of questions and the officers present answered them as appropriate.

The Committee confirmed its support for the proposed scheme and reaffirmed its position that houses must be allocated to local people and that the Parish Council would wish to be involved in any nomination procedures.

Mr Drummond-Hay reported that once agreement had been formalised with the County Council there would be a public consultation day where forms would be available to both comment and to express an interest. At the appropriate time a schedule of events would be drawn up along with a timescale for the Parish Council's information.

Members suggested that it would make good sense for Mr Drummond-Hay to liaise with County Council officers regarding access to the site in light of the capital project that had been agreed that would see a brand new primary school being built on County Council owned land behind Church Road.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Messrs Drummond-Hay and Addison and Ms White be thanked for their attendance at the meeting; and
- (2) the Clerk be requested to contact the County Property Manager, Mr Ian Gould, and inform him that the Council is very supportive of the affordable housing scheme as proposed by Northern Affordable Homes, would want housing allocation to be targeted at people who are from Saughall and would wish to be involved and have an input into any nomination procedures.

30 FIDDLERS LANE SWING PARK

Members carried out a site inspection and had regard to the quarterly operational report prepared by Morral Play Solutions.

The Committee also considered the possibility of providing new updated play equipment following a presentation by Mr G Butler of 51 Hermitage Road at the

Council meeting held on 2 July 2007 (Minute No /2007 refers) when he described the present equipment as “being from the 1960s and the worst around”.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Clerk be requested to provide Mr Wilkinson with a copy of the quarterly report and ask him to carry out all of the repairs that he can and inform her of any work/actions he is unable to take;
- (2) the work/actions referred to at (1) above be further considered if and when they are communicated to the Clerk by Mr Wilkinson;
- (3) the need for play equipment to be painted be taken into account when the Council sets its budget in January 2008 for the 2008/09 Municipal Year; and
- (4) Councillor R Shukla be requested to look at the various brochures available and on the internet detailing new play equipment, take some soundings from local people and children and make a presentation to the next Committee meeting on various options so that the Clerk can then ask for quotations/professional presentations on modern play equipment schemes currently available on the market.

31 GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK DEVELOPMENT

Councillor Mrs J Young informed that she had spoken and met on-site with Mr Derek Bird, the former Project Co-ordinator. He had been in contact with Mr Des Francis, the Council’s contractor, and it seemed that some progress was being made. A scheme of work had been agreed. The land would be mown, harrowed and stone picked by hand. Mr Bird had agreed to attend the meeting but unfortunately was not in attendance.

The Committee carried out a site visit and noted that both hedges on Fiddlers Lane needed to be cut on the inside and that some strimming was required close to the fence on the Long Lane side. Members also agreed on the repositioning of the bench that had been in the car parking area.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Clerk be requested to ask All Cheshire Garden Services to carry out the strimming referred to above;
- (3) the Clerk be requested to obtain quotations from All Cheshire Garden Services and from Mr Gordon Dutton to cut back the hedges referred to above; and
- (4) the Clerk be requested to ask Mr H Wilkinson to position the bench (that had previously been in the area where mesh was laid recently) to the right of the goal just outside the fenced car parking area.

32 SECOND ROUND OF BIDS FROM GOWY NORTH AREA COMMITTEE
BUDGET 2007/08

The Committee agreed that it would support a bid in the longer term made by the Vernon Institute Management Committee to paint the side of its building on Hermitage Road. This was costly as it involved obtaining a Road Closure Order. Councillor RA Storrar also agreed to speak to Chester City Council's Conservation Officer about this problem.

Councillor Mrs J Young informed of the problem with the heating system in the Uniform Group's Headquarters. She had obtained a quotation for a new heating system in the sum of £1,842.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Councillor Mrs J Young, as the Council's representative on the Vernon Institute Management Committee, be requested to raise the proposal to make a funding application to financially assist the painting of the Vernon Institute building at their next meeting; and
- (2) Councillor Mrs J Young be supported in her intention to make an application for funding to the North Gowy Area Committee to provide a new heating system for the Uniform Group's Headquarters.

33 SAUGHALL SCHOOLS AMALGAMATION

The Committee received the following information in respect of the Saughall schools amalgamation, provided by Cheshire County Council's Planning and Development Officer, Children's Services:

- Statutory Public Notices were published on 20th April 2007 for a 6 week period, and expired on 1st June 2007.
- Cheshire County Council wrote to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator on 12th June referring to its proposal, jointly with the Chester Diocesan Board of Education, to discontinue Saughall The Ridings Infant School and Thomas Wedge Church of England Junior School and establish a new voluntary controlled Church of England primary school in Saughall.
- The proposal fell to be determined after the abolition of the School Organisation Committee and was therefore referred to the adjudicator in accordance with transitional arrangements contained in regulations in the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- A letter was received from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator dated 20th July 2007 together with a copy of the Determination which approved the proposal. The Determination states -

'Under the powers conferred on me by The School Organisation (Transitional Provisions) (England) Regulations 2007 I hereby approve the proposal to discontinue Saughall The Ridings Infant School and Thomas Wedge Church of England Junior School on 31st August 2009 and establish a new voluntary controlled Church of England primary school in Saughall for 280 children from 1st

September 2009. This approval is conditional upon additional playing field land having been provided for the school by 31st March 2008 and upon planning approval for the construction of the proposed new school having been obtained by 31st March 2008.'

- The Temporary Governing Body, to oversee matters relating to the new primary school, has been appointed.
- The Design Team has been appointed by County Property Management Services and an initial meeting has taken place between the Design Group, Headteachers, Chair of Governors (both Infant and Junior Chairs), Officers of CCC.
- Various Site surveys have been initiated i.e. ecological, habitat, tree survey, drainage etc.

RESOLVED:

That the position regarding the amalgamation of the two Saughall schools be noted.

34 COMMITTEE MEETING TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL ON THE BUDGET

The Committee noted that the meeting to give initial consideration to the budget had been scheduled for 17 January 2008 and the Budget Council meeting was scheduled for 21 January 2008. This allowed very little time for the Clerk to draw up a draft budget and write the Minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee meeting scheduled for 17 January 2008 be brought forward to 7:30pm on Thursday, 3 January 2008.