

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH COUNCIL held on 2 February 2009 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor DF Holman (in the Chair)
Councillor WI Humphrey (Homewatch Co-ordinator)
Councillor B Kerr
Councillor Mrs J Knox
Councillor RK Shukla
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor Mrs H Thorniley-Jones
Councillor A Warrington

Mr H Dobson, Internal Auditor

27 APOLOGIES FOR AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Apologies for authorised absence were received from Councillors Mrs J and JG Johnson, Mrs D Whitton and Mrs JM Young.

28 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs J Knox and Mrs JE Storrar declared personal interests in respect of the item on the agenda – The New School and the Future of the Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School Building (Minute No. 35/2009 refers) because of their association with the local schools.

Councillor RK Shukla also declared a personal interest in respect of the item on the agenda – Proposed Walk-In Health Centre, Blacon (Minute No. 37 refers) because he runs a Pharmacy in Saughall.

29 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Council meetings held on 5 and 19 January 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

30 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Planning Committee held on 5 January 2009 be received.

31 GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK DEVELOPMENT

(a) Report of the Field Site Panel

It was reported that hawthorn whips had been obtained to fill in the holes on the Fiddlers Lane hedge. Councillors RA Storrar and Mrs JM Young had planted them.

It was also reported that Councillor RA Storrar had replaced the beech tree that had died.

The perimeter path was covered with weeds and rabbits had been digging holes in it.

The pond was full of rubbish and it was agreed that the Sporting Organisations would clean it out sooner rather than later.

A quotation to tidy up the roadside hedge had been requested from Mr G Dutton and was awaited.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and Cheshire County Council's Area Maintenance Engineer be asked for a price for spraying the perimeter path with weedkiller on the day, in the Spring, when he sprays the gutters in Saughall.

(b) Car Park Drainage

As the car park was waterlogged and unusable and a quote in the sum of £880 had been received to pipe the car park to remedy the drainage problem. This could only be done if the drain near 2 Fiddlers Lane could take the extra water.

RESOLVED:

That the drainage work in the car park be carried out subject to advice from the Area Maintenance Engineer in respect of the drain near 2 Fiddlers Lane.

32 POLICE/HOMEWATCH

(a) Police

It was reported that PCSO Sue Morrison was ill and that the February 2009 written report had not been received yet.

PCSO Mike Butler's January 2009 report was appended to the agenda for Members' information.

(b) Cheshire Constabulary, Police Community Support Officer –Partner Service Level Agreement

The Council had entered into a three-year Agreement with the Cheshire Constabulary that had commenced on 1 April 2007 and ran until 31 March 2010. The Scheme could only be terminated before 31 March 2010 if either party gave 12 months notice after the Scheme had been in place for a minimum of 12 months. No such notice had been given.

It was expected that the Constabulary would consult the Council on a new agreement before the current one came to an end. Therefore, it was proposed that Councillors should now monitor the working of the current agreement and if it were agreed that it was not working satisfactorily it would be taken into account along with the cost of any new agreement when a decision on whether or not to enter into a new Agreement was required.

RESOLVED:

That Councillors continue to monitor the working of the Agreement and the matter be discussed again when a decision on a new agreement is required by the Police Authority and new costings are provided.

(c) Homewatch

Councillor WI Humphrey, in his capacity as Homewatch Coordinator, detailed low level crime and anti-social activity that had taken place over the last month in the village. Matters reported included:

- a mini motor being driven in Parkway
- Cold calling
- a disturbance in Church Road during the night
- 8 burglaries in the village since Christmas
- an increase in requests to mark valuables

Councillor Humphrey rounded off his report by thanking Barry Downs, Tony Summers and the two PCSOs for their help in putting measures in place to ensure community safety during a recent funeral that had attracted a great many mourners.

RESOLVED:

That the Homewatch Co-ordinator's report be received.

(d) Saughall Neighbourhood Management Team

RESOLVED:

That Saughall Neighbourhood Management Team's Co-ordinator, Mr Tony Summers, be invited to a future meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee to inform Members of his Team's activities so that they can continue to perform their monitoring role.

33 YOUTH ISSUES

Councillor WI Humphrey reported that the Vernon Institute Management Committee had been asked to provide a key for the interior yard so the Youth Club could use it for barbecues etc. Gas radiators were being replaced with electric ones and a broken window was being replaced.

Five Saturdays between February and December 2009 had been earmarked for youngsters to pack shopping at Morrisons Supermarket in Upton in order to boost the Youth Club's funds.

It was noted that the Club's attendance had doubled since it had opened.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

34 CO-OP STORES, CHURCH ROAD, SAUGHALL

The Council noted that there had been an improvement at the Co-op Store. Outside was much tidier and the recycling bins were being emptied regularly.

RESOLVED:

That as the problems identified at the Co-op Store have been dealt with satisfactorily, this item be removed from future Council agenda.

35 THE NEW SCHOOL AND THE FUTURE OF THE THOMAS WEDGE CE (CONTROLLED) JUNIOR SCHOOL BUILDING

Councillor RA Storrar provided the Council with an update on progress being made in respect of the new school building development. It was noted that the new school building's completion was scheduled for the middle of the autumn term but there may be some slippage.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

36 LAND AT LODGE LANE, SAUGHALL FOR RURAL AFFORDABLE HOMES

On Monday, 26 January 2009 the Council had facilitated a meeting between some Council Members, Chester City Council's Housing Strategy Manager, representatives of the Chester District Housing Trust and the County Land Agent to discuss the proposal to build 12 low cost dwellings in Saughall on land currently in the ownership of Cheshire County Council (County Farms Estate).

Chester District Housing Trust was interested in taking the scheme forward, subject to the cost of the land and as the land had been earmarked as an exceptions site in the Green Belt, it was hoped that the County Council or its successor, Cheshire West and Chester Council, would seek less than the full market value for it.

It was agreed at the meeting that negotiations would commence and that the Parish Council would be kept up to date with progress.

Those Parish Council representatives in attendance at the meeting had made it clear that the Council was very keen to see the low cost/affordable housing proposal come to fruition. The Housing Needs Survey had identified that there was need for it to be built in Saughall. It had also been pointed out that a temporary access road had been built for use whilst the new primary school was being built and that it would be a shame to reinstate the land and waste resources when an access would be needed to build these homes.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the Clerk be requested to write to the representatives of Chester District Housing Trust, Chester City Council's Housing Strategy Manager, and the County Land Agent asking them to do all in their power to get the scheme off the ground and informing them that this Council is eagerly awaiting the results of investigations; and

(2) the communication at (1) above be copied to Cheshire West and Chester Council's local ward members for information.

37 PROPOSED WALK-IN HEALTH CENTRE, BLACON

Members informed that the meeting with the Primary Care Trust scheduled for 25 January 2009 had been cancelled and consequently there was no progress to report on this initiative.

RESOLVED:

That this item be not included on future Council agenda until such time as there is some progress to report.

38 CHESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN AND INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION – DECEMBER 2008 – FEBRUARY 2009

Members received a copy of the consultation document and noted that the consultation period ended on 4 February 2009.

RESOLVED:

That Members be requested to respond individually to the consultation on the form supplied for the purpose.

39 HIGHWAY ISSUES

(a) Parked Cars on Pavements

The problem was ongoing and some Members continued to put polite notices on offending vehicles.

(b) A5117 Major Roadworks

It was noted that the next Parish Council Liaison Meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, 17 February 2009.

(c) Speeding Traffic and the Proposal for Community Speed Watch Signage

It was noted that no progress had been made in respect of the Community Speed Watch signage proposal. Members were reminded that Derek Bowker of Cheshire Community Action had agreed to provide Councillor Mrs JE Storrar with more information on what else should be done to ensure the criteria was met so that the signage could be installed.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to contact Derek Bowker and inform him that the Council is anxiously awaiting the findings of his investigation into what else can be done to meet the criteria for the installation of Community speed watch signage.

(d) Fly Posting

The situation had improved significantly.

RESOLVED:

That fly posting be no longer a standard item on the Council's agenda.

(e) The Current "Bus War" and Public Transport Services

Councillor RK Shukla informed that the road between 15-30 The Ridings was too narrow for an Arriva bus and a car to pass without one of the vehicles mounting the grass verge. This was unacceptable as the verges were being destroyed. It was noted that First Bus had slimmer buses so would be able to pass other vehicles without driving on to the verge. Therefore, if the 15 and 15A Services were swapped the problem would be remedied.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to write to the County Council's Transport Co-ordination Department to make it aware of the problem and ask what it could do to remedy the situation.

(f) Area Maintenance Engineer's Annual Village Inspection

The Council received a report on proceedings at the Area Maintenance Engineer's Annual Village Inspection. A number of problems had been identified including the following:

- sewage problem at 100 Hermitage Road
- tree at 72 Darlington Crescent
- Copper Beach, Church Road – sewage problem
- grit bin provision
- proposal to install a Puffin Crossing on Church Road
- damage caused by vehicles to grass verges
- 46/48 Church Road – manhole cover missing

RESOLVED: That

(1) the Clerk be requested to ask the Area Maintenance Engineer to report back to the 2 March 2009 meeting on progress made; and

(2) this Council will monitor any progress made at its next meeting.

(g) Park Avenue – Parking Chaos

It was reported that PCSO Mike Butler had sorted out the problem and the situation had significantly improved.

RESOLVED:

That this item be no longer included as a standard item on future Council agenda.

(h) Public Transport Services and Bus Service to Chester Railway Station

Pursuant to Minute No 13(e)/2009 the Clerk had responded to Cheshire County Council's consultation referring to the Government's Integrated Transport Policy, making the point that although there was an hourly train from Chester Railway Station to London and reminding its Integrated and Flexible Transport and Regeneration Service that Saughall does not have a bus service to the Station and so parishoners had to alight the bus at the Town Hall and walk to Frodsham Street to catch a bus to take them to the Station. She had also complained about the damage caused by buses in Saughall to the grass verges and the roundabout at the bus terminus and that there was no evening Sunday services.

Neil Roberts, Operations Manager, had responded acknowledging receipt and informing that he would add the Parish Council's comments to his list of considerations and agreeing to pass on the comments about damage to the grass verges to the bus companies.

RESOLVED:

That report be noted.

(i) A540 The Parkgate Road

The Council was informed that a meeting of the Chester Highways and Transportation Joint Committee (chaired by Councillor Brian Crowe) had been held on Thursday, 22 January 2009. The Clerk had not received an agenda but understood that the Committee had received a report informing of a study carried out by consultants and subsequent recommendations not to change the speed limits on the A540. It appeared that no Parish Council that had the A540 passing through their areas was consulted or made aware that the meeting was taking place. Following representations from Councillor Eddie Jenkins of Puddington and District Parish Council, Highway Officers had been persuaded to look again at speed limits on the length of road between the Cheshire/Wirral boundary and Two Mills, which was one of the two routes in the County with the highest risk.

Councillor RA Storrar had been attendance at the meeting and he reported on its proceedings and that the report had been referred back for further detailed discussions with the appropriate Parish Councils.

The road at present ran through both Chester and Ellesmere Port and Neston areas. With the new Cheshire West and Chester Council taking over on 1 April 2009 it was sensible for one Council to consider the scheme rather than doing it piecemeal.

Councillor A Warrington reported that the footpath running from Church Road to Park Avenue needed attention and a tree near the path required trimming as it obscured a street light.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the reports be received; and
- (2) the Clerk be requested to find out who is responsible for the footpath referred to above and inform of its poor state in the hope that the appropriate remedial action will be taken.

40 ACCOUNTS

(a) Payments made since the meeting of the Council held on 5 January 2009:

RESOLVED:

That the following payments be approved:

Financial Year 2008/2009	£	Cheque No
Cancelled		102219
Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council (Postage)	18.98	102220
Mr R Hipkiss (Street Cleaning)	1,007.87	102221
Mrs S Hudspeth (Expenses)	34.50	102222
Mrs S Hudspeth (Salary)	636.62	102223
University of Chester (Printing 3 Newsletters)	717.50	102224
Mr H Wilkinson (Odd jobs)	22.50	102225

(b) Receipts

RESOLVED:

That the following receipts be noted:

	£
Interest on 14 Day Interest Account to 21 January 2009	0.32
Chester City Council's Goway North Area Committee's Grant towards cost of Goalend	2,300.00

(c) Cash to Bank Reconciliation and Golden Jubilee Park Development Fund Reconciliation

RESOLVED:

That the contents be noted.

(d) Street Cleaning Grant – Parish Orderly Grant Rate April 2008 – March 2009

Chester City Council had informed the Clerk that, following the recent Local Government National Pay Award, the hourly rate that would apply to the Parish Orderly grant applications would be £6.21 per hour with effect from 1 April 2008. Arrears would be automatically paid through BACS.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

41 MILLENNIUM FUND

Councillor Mrs D Whitton had informed the Clerk that there was currently £269.75 in the Millennium Fund.

The Council had initially made a donation to the Millennium Fund and it was now of the view that the bank account that held the Millennium Fund should be closed and the balance paid into the Parish Council's account and held in the Golden Jubilee Park designated fund to help finance the cost of the car park drainage work.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(a) Update on Progress

Councillor RA Storrar reported that the Shadow Council's Executive would be considering a report on the Setting of the Council Budget and Council Tax for 2009/2010 at its meeting scheduled for 11 February 2009. The Shadow Council meeting would be held on 26 February 2009.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(b) Funding Streams to Town and Parish Councils – Double Taxation

Pursuant to Minute No 15(c)/2009 the Clerk had written to the leader of the Cheshire West and Chester Council, Councillor Mike Jones, on 9 January 2009 and received his letter of reply dated 13 January 2009. Councillor Jones informed that before implementing a system that was fair to all, his Council needed to carry out a full review of Parish Council services and activities to determine the appropriate payments. This course of action would take considerable effort and would also take some time. Likewise his Council could support the development of new Town/Parish/Community Councils and hence avoid the need for such a detailed piece of work.

Councillor Jones went on to say that his Council was committed to reviewing the grants and payments made to Parish Councils during the coming year and looked forward to working with all Parish And Town Councils in a positive way during this process and in giving Parish and Town Councils greater involvement in the delivery of services in their communities as it developed its thinking on Area Partnership Boards and Local Forums.

The Council considered the content of Councillor Jones' letter in detail and proposed that a further letter be sent in response thanking him for taking the trouble to respond so comprehensively on this matter and informing him that this Council recognises that double taxation is a complex and challenging issue and that the new unitary authority will need to work through and provide a solution to what is a vexatious matter. The letter was to state that this Council believes that Cheshire West and Chester Council took the wrong option and that it should have matched the Chester City Council grant because the Council tax payers in the parished areas of the Chester District are now disadvantaged. If Double Taxation Grant had been paid in 2009/2010 this Council's Parish Tax increase would have only been 3% and not the 10% it actually was now.

The letter would go on to say that for most Parish Councils the revenue coming in was from the Parish Precept, as they had no revenue generation activities. This Council has lost approximately £4,000 in Double Taxation Grant; therefore, it has to increase its parishioner's taxation burden by that amount. This does not apply to Principal Councils who receive Revenue Support Grant and where Council Tax funds only about 20% of expenditure.

Members agreed that as a direct result of Cheshire West and Chester Council's actions those living in parished areas were being disadvantaged compared to those in unparished areas of the Chester District during 2009/10. The Council, therefore, urged Councillor Jones to consider, for 2010/11, whether his Council could make use of Special Expenses provision to ensure that those in parished areas received compensation for those services they pay for through the Parish Precept and for which they also pay through Council Tax levied by the Unitary Authority although they do not receive the service from the Unitary Authority.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to write back to Councillor Jones in the terms detailed above.

- (c) Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Development Framework – Draft Statement of Community Involvement

This consultation ran until Friday, 27 February 2009.

RESOLVED:

That the Finance and General Purposes Committee be requested to consider the Draft Statement of Community Involvement (already sent to each Member of the Committee) and draft an appropriate response at its next meeting scheduled for Thursday, 26 February 2009.

43 PARISH COUNCIL SURGERIES

- (a) Surgery held on 31 January 2009

Councillor Mrs J Knox informed that she had stationed herself in her car on the forecourt of the Co-op Stores but although notices had been posted drawing attention to this, no one had attended her Surgery.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

- (b) Surgery on Saturday, 28 February 2009 between 10:00am and 10:30am

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mrs D Whitton be requested to preside over the next Parish Council Surgery on the forecourt of the Co-op Stores, Church Road, Saughall and bring a report on its proceedings to the next meeting of the Council.

44 ODD JOBS

There were no odd jobs to be done at the moment.

45 VERNON INSTITUTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (VIMC)

Harry Dobson, Treasurer of the VIMC, had left the meeting but before doing so had passed two invoices to the Clerk. He had also emailed her the previous evening to inform that the VIMC had incurred costs of £785.00 in respect of floor repairs to the small hall and £3,015.00 for repairs to the flat roof over the entrance - a total of £3,800.00. He had requested that the Council give consideration to recompensing the VIMC for half of the amount - £1,900.00 from its designated fund for the Vernon Institute's maintenance, repair and refurbishment.

Members were aware that the flat roof had been repaired in recent time and wondered why it needed more work now.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to contact Harry Dobson to:

- (1) ask when the flat roof over the Vernon Institute's entrance last received repairs, what was the nature of them and how much did the work cost; and
- (2) point out that in future, if the VIMC expects the Council to contribute to the cost of any maintenance work in respect of the Vernon Institute building, that before it enters into any contracts, it is expected that the VIMC will discuss its proposals with the Council a proper manner.

46 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

(a) Meetings Coming Up

It was noted that the next Gowy North Area Committee meetings was scheduled for Thursday, 5 March 2009 between 7:00pm and 9:00pm at Burley Memorial Hall, Village Road, Waverton, CH3 7QN.

Councillor WI Humphrey agreed to attend this meeting to represent the Council.

(b) Reports from Members who had recently attended outside Meetings

Introducing Cheshire West and Chester Council

Councillors RA and Mrs JE Storrar had attended this event and reported that it had been very well attended and those there had received a very informative presentation from the Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council, Councillor Mike Jones, and the Chief Executive, Steve Robinson.

It was noted that the new unitary authority wished to support parish Councils in their important work and had stressed the importance of Quality Parish Council status. It had been indicated, "more attention would be paid to Quality Parish Councils and they were more likely to get assistance". Parish Councils had been encouraged to achieve Quality Parish Council status or join with Parish Council who had already obtained it.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

47 COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED

(a) Rev Brian Harris, All Saints Church, Saughall

Following the Budget Council meeting on 19 January 2009 the Clerk had informed Rev Harris that the Council had agreed to set aside £2,000 in a designated fund towards the costs of creating a Garden of Rest. Members hoped that this action would help the Parochial Church Council to attract other grants as it provided it with a base on which to make applications and a means to match fund any successful bids.

It was reported that Rev Harris had written to the Chairman on 27 January 2009 and the Clerk conveying the Parochial Church Council's thanks for the promised contribution of £2,000 earmarked to help fund the cost of its proposed Garden of Rest. He had also informed that the Church's running costs were exceeding income and he was unable to make up the shortfall from Church funds. The aim was to attract external funding on a match-funding basis. As the project would benefit the whole village regardless of religious denomination, for the foreseeable future, the Parochial Church Council was asking for a further £1,000 to ease its path considerably in bringing the project to fruition.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to reply to Rev Harris and inform that unfortunately, at the present time, it is not possible to make a further contribution of £1,000 towards the cost of the proposed Garden of Rest project because this Council has already set its budget and submitted its precept request to Cheshire West and Chester Council.

(b) Mrs Phil Humphrey

The Clerk reported that she had received and accepted Mrs Humphrey's resignation from the Council effective from 22 January 2009. Mrs Humphrey's letter of resignation was read out.

The Clerk also informed that she had declared that the Council has a casual vacancy and posted the necessary notices on notice boards on Friday, 30 January 2009. They stated that:

“Any ten electors in the parish may call an election by writing to the Returning Officer, Chester City Council, The Forum, Chester, CH1 2HS, requesting that such an election be held to fill the said vacancy, such request to made within fourteen days (not counting Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays) from the date of this notice. In the event of no election being called, the Parish Council will fill the vacancy by co-option.”

The Clerk informed that if no election was called and the Council was asked to fill the vacancy by co-option using the method it had used previously, inviting the unsuccessful candidate with the highest number of votes at the 2006 election, after Mrs Knox (who was co-opted last time there was a vacancy) to take up the seat, the unsuccessful candidates would need to be invited in the following order:

Votes	Candidate
186	Mr G Southey
178	Mrs AM Hipkiss
146	Mrs ES Cowle
136	Mr M Cowle

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) the Clerk be requested to write to Mrs Humphrey to accept her resignation and to thank her for her valuable contribution to the work of the Council; and
- (3) if no election is called it be agreed that Mr G Southey be invited to take up the vacant seat on the Council in the first instance.

48 CIRCULARS

The following circulars had been received. Any one wishing to see a copy would contact the Clerk.

Cheshire West and Chester Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2009
Chester City Council's Area Winter 2008 - Gowy North Edition