

MINUTES OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
held on 28 April 2008 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor DF Holman
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
Councillor WI Humphrey (Homewatch Co-ordinator)
Councillor Mrs J Johnson
Councillor Mrs J Knox
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor Mrs H Thornily-Jones
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor Mrs D Whitten
Councillor Mrs JM Young (in the Chair)

PCSO M Butler

And 7 parishioners as recorded in the attendance register

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor B Kerr
Councillor JG Johnson
Councillor RK Shukla

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of Saughall and Shotwick Park's Parish Meeting held on 23 April 2007 be confirmed as a correct record.

3 CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman welcomed parishioners to their Annual Assembly and then presented her Annual Report setting out the Council's achievements and successes over the last twelve months. She detailed ongoing initiatives, progress and the Council's aims and aspirations for the future.

Various issues were highlighted and considered in detail, these included:

- **Change in Membership**

Councillor Colin Moss had resigned from the Council because of personal problems in July 2007. The Chairman paid tribute to him and thanked him for all his efforts and particularly those with the Golden Jubilee Park.

No election had been called so it fell to the Council to fill the vacant seat by co-option. It agreed that the candidate with the most votes at the last election but not already a

Member of the Council, Mrs Janette Knox, would be invited to fill the vacant seat. She accepted and attended her first meeting on 1 October 2007.

- **Finance**

The Council's budgets for the financial years 2007/08 and 2008/09 were as follows:

2007/08	£62,231.00
2008/09	£59,710.00

The 2008/09 precept had increased by 2% on the previous year. However, unlike the other two tiers of local government, Parish Council's did not receive Government grants and was funded by means of the local Council Tax - £40.41 per household per band D property.

- **Parish Room**

The Council had agreed that its occupancy of the Parish Room was no longer providing value for money so the Room had been vacated on 29 February 2008. Meetings previously held in the Parish Room were now being held in the Uniform Groups' Headquarters and PCSO Butler was using it as his base. Council meetings and Surgeries were being held in the Vernon Institute.

- **Vernon Institute**

The Council had a savings fund set up so that when work was required it was able to contribute to the costs of improving the fabric and assisting the refurbishment of the Vernon Institute building, which was listed and an important community facility and village meeting point. During the last year the Council had contributed £1,082.06, which was 50% of the cost of the work undertaken.

- **Partnership Working and the PCSO Initiative**

The village had had its own PCSO since 1 April 2007 when Mike Butler took up the position. The Cheshire Constabulary and the Council had signed a joint agreement to develop partnership working towards reducing crime and disorder in Saughall and increasing the level of public confidence so leading to a greater level of reassurance through the provision of a PCSO. The Council was contributing £11,000 a year for the first three years to help finance this initiative. After that, if it continued to support a PCSO post in the village, the sum would increase to reflect the cost of living.

Mike Butler's role was to provide a visible uniformed presence and make a contribution to the reduction of crime and disorder and the promotion of public reassurance and quality of life.

He was taking forward and supporting new Home and Country watch schemes, embarking on proactive traffic safety schemes and working with the young people of the Parish to find alternative diversions to ensure a reduction of anti social behaviour in the local area. Mike was doing a good job and was very enthusiastic and committed to his work.

- **Saughall Neighbourhood Management Team**

The Council had used its partnership with the police as a mechanism to form a Neighbourhood Management Team with other partners such as the Cheshire Fire Service, Chester City Council and community volunteers. The Team was funded for a three-year period through a £10,000 grant from the Cheshire Community Council.

This new Team was the success story of the year. It was made up of volunteers and its activities were co-ordinated by Tony Summers. Its aim was to make Saughall and Shotwick Park a safer place to live. It had arranged a safety competition and other activities including 'Walking Buses' in conjunction with the two Schools and addressed issues such as the flooding problems and complaints about street lights being obscured by overgrown trees on Hermitage Road and the state of the bus stop at the top of Aspen Grove. A Traffic Survey had been carried out at the request of residents of Seahill Road. The Team had also assisted with a Fire Safety Survey at the Uniform Groups' Headquarters and helped the Fire Service to undertake safety surveys in Saughall and fitting smoke alarms free of charge.

- **Golden Jubilee Park**

This project had been ongoing since 2002 when the Council purchased additional land for recreational purposes on Fiddlers Lane, at a cost of £27,000. The contractor finally completed the first phase of the development at the end of 2007 at a total cost of £28,930 plus vat (which the Council claimed back) paid in five instalments dating back as far as 2004. This had included ground and drainage work, de-stoning, rolling and seeding the sports pitches and laying a perimeter path. It had now been handed over to the sporting organisations and they must maintain the ground within the perimeter path. Half of the work had been funded by various grants from Chester City Council and the rest by the Council through the precept.

The Council had improved the parking provision by recently fencing off an area to the side of the Uniform Groups' Headquarters at a cost of £2,558.09, including the new RoSPA compliant gate and laying mesh on the grass at a cost of £9,344.30. Both field gates had been "traveller Proofed" at a cost of £180.

The Council had added to the play equipment for toddlers by buying some Stepping Stones (£199) and a Balancing Beam (£187) funded by a grant from Chester City Council.

2008 had got off to a good start with two more successful funding applications to Chester City Council. One had been for £5,000 to match fund the purchase and installation of an aerial runway for older children. It had cost £7,746.34 and the difference of £2,746.34 had been borne by the Council. The other successful bid had been for £2,900 to provide and install CCTV equipment in the Uniform Groups' Headquarters in the interests of community safety.

The Council's next task was to decide what to include in the second phase and residents views on this were being sought.

The 'Millennium Stone' would be moved to the Park and a time capsule containing items supplied by the groups in the village would be buried in a chamber underneath it.

- **The New School and the Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School**

A Drop-in session had been arranged by Cheshire County Council and held earlier that evening immediately before this meeting. Its purpose had been to provide an opportunity for local people to see the plans, make comments and ask the Planning Officer questions. Unfortunately, the event that had taken place had not fulfilled this purpose and had been stage managed by County Council Officers.

The Council, as a statutory consultee, would be considering the plans and making its observations on them at its next meeting on Monday, 12 May. Its views would then be conveyed to the Strategic Planning Authority so that they could be taken into account when it determined the planning application for the new primary school in June.

- **Affordable Housing Scheme**

Northern Affordable Homes Ltd had reached an agreement with Cheshire County Council to purchase some land behind Lodge Lane on which to build affordable housing. There had been a delay because of legalities but it was hoped that the building company would be able to hold a consultation day in the village soon and that a planning application would follow in the summer.

- **Parish Plan**

The Parish Plan had been published three years ago and was reviewed annually in the autumn.

- **Youth Club**

The Youth Club had not been without problems this year. The older children had continued to meet but the younger children had been unable to because no one was willing to run their club.

The Parish Council had recently financed a very successful outing to the bowling alley for 16 members of the club at a total cost of £146, including refreshments.

- **Traffic Issues**

Traffic congestion, damage to grass verges, problems with parking and speeding cars were a recurring theme at Council meetings. The Council worked with the Police, the Highways Authority and the bus companies to try to remedy these problems.

Councillors and volunteers had been trained to use a speed gun and a Speed Indicator Device, which they borrowed from the City Council. Speed checks would be repeated often as deterrents for those who regularly offended.

- **“Bus War”**

The Council had been so concerned over the problems caused by the increase in Saughall bus services that an urgent meeting had been held with an Arriva Inspector.

Discussion centred on the size, number, speed, damage caused to the grass verges, traffic congestion and the behaviour of some drivers.

The Inspector had agreed that there was a problem and informed that new smaller and narrower buses were on order and were expected to be in use by June. There were problems when buses had to mount the pavements to get past parked vehicles, smaller buses would remedy this to a certain extent but motorists were urged to park responsibly. Some adjustments had been made to the route at the beginning and end of the school days. Buses would also wait at the Peg until the bus in the Ridings estate had come out and gone past. A review meeting would be held with the Inspector in the summer.

- **Bus Shelters**

The annual maintenance cost of the five newest shelters was £1,250.00. This year repairs had also been made to the Council owned shelter at the bottom of Church Road near the Vernon Institute at a cost of £146.94.

- **A5117 Major Roadworks**

Despite the very wet January, work had continued, allowing the surfacing to the new link roads and bridge to be completed and they were now in use. The new section of the road had been opened to traffic on 7 February. The next stage was to construct the remainder of the westbound carriageway and this should be opened in mid May.

The wet weather had hindered work on Lodge Lane Bridge. Carillion said that it would be completed when material became available from beneath the temporary diversion at Parkgate Road. It was expected that the bridge would be opened towards the end of June.

Councillors attended Carillon's regular liaison meetings to monitor progress and make representations over any issues that affected Saughall. They had been particularly concerned about the rodent problem over the last few months and had made appropriate representations to Carillion and to Environmental Health.

- **Kissing Gates**

The Council had been successful in an application it made to Cheshire County Council to replace 16 stiles with 16 kissing gates free of charge. A further 3 free kissing gates had also been provided. The Chairman thanked the landowners and tenant farmers for giving permission for these replacements as they had increased accessibility to the countryside. She also thanked Steve Holden, the Countryside Officer for his contribution.

- **Planning**

The Council was a statutory consultee on all planning applications in its area. It provided a focal point for the views of local residents and had an opportunity to support or oppose each application. In the course of this Municipal Year the Council had dealt with 47 applications compared with 55 last year.

- **Christmas Lights Celebration**

Due to a breakdown in communications there had been no Christmas Lights switch on ceremony in the village last year, which had been extremely disappointing. To ensure this didn't happen again the Council had taken the lead and set up a Steering Committee of volunteers, headed by Councillor Jean Johnson to make the necessary arrangements for the event, which was scheduled for Thursday, 27 November 2008. Anyone willing to help was asked to speak to Jean.

- **Communications**

The Parish Council's website continued to be regularly updated. Four newsletters were published each year and local people and village organisations were welcome to contribute to them.

- **Vote of Thanks**

Overall, the Parish Council had had a very busy year. It had been proactive and had a list of achievements to be proud of and it looked forward to accomplishing even more during the next twelve months.

The Chairman paid tribute to and thanked the following people:

Tony Leach, the Parish Paths Warden, for walking all of the public footpaths in the parish and liaising with the Countryside Officer and the Clerk over problems encountered, ensuring walker's accessibility and safety and for his help with the kissing gate project;

Harry Dobson for carrying out the role of Internal Auditor;

PCSO Mike Butler for his help and support throughout the year;

Councillor Ian Humphrey for his efforts in his role as Homewatch Co-ordinator;

Bert Wilkinson for all the odd jobs the Council had put his way; and

Helen Cake-Bread, the Tree and Environmental Warden, for her help and advice.

The Chairman also thanked colleague Members of the Council, two of whom were also City Councillors for their help and support along with County Councillor David Rowlands who regularly attended Council meetings and kept it abreast of County policies and initiatives; the Clerk for her hard work over the last twelve months; and the many other local people who had given their time over the past year to the affairs of the Parish Council.

- **And Finally**

The Chairman reminded those assembled that there would be a 'Family Fun Day' on Bank Holiday Monday, 5 May 2008 to mark the official opening of the Golden Jubilee Park on Fiddlers Lane by the Sheriff of Chester, Councillor Andrew Storrar.

Councillor Ian Humphrey had been leading a Steering Committee of volunteers who had organised this event. She thanked everyone involved for giving up their time so generously to ensure it all went without a hitch.

All local people were invited to attend this event. It would commence at 2.00pm. Local Groups and Organisations in the village were making contributions. The Chairman urged everyone to go along and make it a day to remember.

4 PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Questions and subsequent discussions centred on the following issues:

- The Parish Council's website was excellent and much better than those of many other local Councils;
- New buses travelling through the Ridings estate since April 2007;
- Who paid for the new CCTV equipment at the Uniform Groups' Headquarters; (It was noted that it had been funded from a grant from Chester City Council.)
- The Golden Jubilee Park development and who could use it and when; (It was noted that any sporting club that was formed could use the sports pitched inside of the perimeter path and the Park was available to all Saughall residents.)
- The multi-use football and games unit or "goal end" and tarmac pad to be installed shortly in Golden Jubilee Park funded by a grant of £2,300 from Chester City Council's Gowy North Area Committee and the difference match funded by the Parish Council through the precept;
- The proposed new Primary School and the Affordable Housing Scheme, the temporary and permanent roads that would need to be constructed and the agreements that would have to be reached in this regard;
- The results of the recent traffic study; (The Chairman agreed to obtain copies from the Saughall Neighbourhood Management Team and supply them to those who had requested them.)
- Major disappointment that some or all of the Thomas Wedge School building could not be retained, the erosion of the village's heritage and tradition, possibility of the building being acquired for community use and pre school provision, the golden opportunity that would be lost otherwise and a request that advice on the two trust deeds be sought via the Cheshire Association of Local Councils; (The Council would decide at its next meeting which comments to feed through to the Strategic Planning Authority (Cheshire County Council) on the planning application that had been submitted by the County Property Manager before it made its determination on it in June 2008. Residents were urged, therefore, to make use of the public speaking time at the Council meeting on 12 May 2008 in order to make representations and express their views. (Those wishing to do so must give the Clerk five clear working days written notice of their intentions.))

5 VOTE OF THANKS TO THE CHAIRMAN

Councillor RA Storrar, on behalf of the Council, thanked Councillor Mrs Young for all of the work she had undertaken as Chairman during a very difficult year during which the village had been drawn together through diversity. He hoped she had enjoyed the year and that the village appreciated what she had accomplished.