

MINUTES OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
held on 27 April 2009 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs K Ford
Councillor WI Humphrey (Homewatch Co-ordinator)
Councillor B Kerr
Councillor Mrs J Knox
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor Mrs H Thorniley-Jones
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor Mrs JM Young (in the Chair)

And 4 parishioners as recorded in the attendance register

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor DF Holman
Councillor RK Shukla

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of Saughall and Shotwick Park's Parish Meeting held on 28 April 2008 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 Phil Humphrey resigned from the Council in January 2009. The Chairman paid tribute to her and thanked her for her hard work. A By-election was held on 23 April 2009 and Kathy Ford was duly elected. The Council looked forward to working with her.

- **The New Council**

On 31 March 2009 Cheshire County and the six District Councils were abolished and the new unitary Council Cheshire West and Chester was created on 1 April 2009. Its administrative area covers the former boroughs of Vale Royal and Ellesmere Port and Neston and the City of Chester. The administrative headquarters are at the County Hall. Whether this new

arrangement would prove more efficient and cost effective remained to be seen.

The Chairman put on record the Council's thanks to former County Councillor David Rowlands and wished him well for the future. County Councillor Rowlands regularly attended Council meetings and kept Members abreast of County policies and initiatives. The Chairman also thanked former Chester City Councillors Andrew and Jeanne Storrar for their help and support over the years when they represented this village on the City Council. They were both still Parish Councillors and Andrew was now representing Saughall and Shotwick Park on the new Council.

- **Finance**

The Council's budgets for the financial years 2008/09 and 2009/10 were as follows:

2008/09	£59,710.00
2009/10	£62,590.00

Unlike the new unitary Council, the Parish Council did not receive Government grants and was funded by means of the local Council Tax - £44.53 per household per band D property.

For the last four years Chester City Council had made a double taxation grant. This grant was population based and in 2008/09 amounted to approximately £4,000. However, the new Council decided not to award this grant. This loss in grant had to be taken into account when the Parish Council's budget was set and had serious implications on the level of the parish precept. It had increased by 10% on the previous year but if the grant had been paid the precept would have gone up by only 3%.

The Parish Council had made a number of representations over the injustice of this action. It meant that parished areas of the Chester District were being disadvantaged in comparison with the rest of the area served by the new Council. It had not been reinstated but the Council had been told that the new Council was committed to reviewing the grants and payments that had been made to Parish Councils during the coming year and was looking forward to working with all Parish And Town Councils in a positive way during this process and was 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 Community Forums

- **Parish Council Surgeries**

Since October 2008 a new approach had been taken to Parish Council Surgeries because the Parish Council believed that it was important that it was openly accessible and available to parishioners who wanted to discuss quality of life issues etc with its Members. Surgeries were still held monthly between 10.00am and 10.45am on the Saturday immediately before the Council meeting on the first Monday of the month (second Monday if the first is a

public holiday). They were held outside the Co-op Stores and the dates were published on the notice boards and on the Council's website.

- **Vernon Institute**

The Council had a savings fund so that when work was required it was able to contribute to the costs of improving the building and fabric of the Vernon Institute, a listed building and an important community facility and village meeting point. During the last year the Council had contributed £2,739, 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 Council had a three-year agreement with the Cheshire Constabulary and had contributed £11,000 each year. The Council was now in the final year of the agreement and if it continued to support a PCSO post in the village, the sum was likely to increase.

Mike Butler moved to another area in January and the Chairman put on record the Council's thanks and appreciation of his help and support over the two years he was attached to Saughall and wished him well in his future career. PCSO Sue Morrison had now taken over from Mike. She was getting to know Saughall and its people. Her 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.

- **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 including the Cheshire Fire Service and community volunteers. The Team was funded for a three-year period through a £10,000 grant from the Cheshire Community Council and its aim was to make Saughall and Shotwick Park a safer place for us all to live. It was now in its second year of operation. It was made up of volunteers and its activities were co-ordinated extremely well by Tony Summers.

- **Golden Jubilee Park**

The Council had continued to develop the Park by adding a 4-metre high play net at a cost of £10,921.30. This was part funded by a £5,000 grant from Chester City Council. It had also installed a combination goal end and tarmac pad for ball games at a cost of £17,950. Chester City Council had provided another grant of £2,300 towards it. The funding difference was met from the Council's Golden Jubilee Park Designated Fund.

Following difficulties with installation, the stepping-stones and balancing beam were now also in-situ, along with four park benches that the Council had in storage for some time. Unfortunately, some of the benches had been subjected to mindless vandalism. The car park continued to flood when it rained. The Council was ascertaining what could be done to solve this problem.

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

Saughall All Saints' Church of England Primary School was expected to open in the autumn. It would have 10 classrooms sited to make the best of natural light, a large hall, library, group rooms, practical areas, a home economics area, dedicated secure outdoor play areas for foundation pupils, infants and juniors, a wildlife area, football pitches, running track and an outdoor classroom. The hall and main entrance were being located at the front of the building so that it could be used for community use outside of school hours and a pedestrian crossing was being installed on Church Road to improve safety.

- **Wain House**

Chester District Housing Trust had decided to re-develop Wain House and five bungalows at Rakeway. It was consulting surrounding residents and hoped to start on site within the next 12 months. It would submit its planning application to the planning authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council soon. Planning Officers would then ask the Parish Council for its observations on the application as it was a statutory consultee. The Council had already decided to consider this application itself rather than leave it to its Planning Committee to make any observations.

- **Affordable Housing Scheme**

The Housing Needs Survey identified a need for affordable housing to be built in Saughall. Unfortunately, there had been another set back in respect of this initiative. Northern Affordable Homes Ltd who reached an agreement with Cheshire County Council to purchase land behind Lodge Lane on which to build 12 low cost dwellings went into administration last year and would not be able to proceed.

The Council still wished to take this proposal forward and had held a meeting with Officers of the principal authorities and a housing trust to see what could be done. It had been agreed that negotiations would commence and the Council would be kept up to date on any progress made.

- **Traffic Issues**

Traffic congestion, issues with the buses, damage to grass verges, parking and speeding cars were recurring themes at Council meetings. Members 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 was borrowed from time to time from the principal authority. Speed checks would be repeated often, as a deterrent, for those who regularly offended.

- **The Peg Lay-by**

The lay-by at the Peg had recently been revamped and remarked. It was an official bus stop and it was an offence to park in it. So if people did and they were caught they would receive a fine.

- **A5117 Major Road Works**

The A5117 Deeside Park Junctions Improvement Scheme to reduce congestion, increase safety and support regeneration by removing three bottleneck junctions was officially opened on 3 March 2009. The Highways Agency's Chief Executive, Graham Dalton marked the formal completion of the £61 million scheme by unveiling a plaque at the site.

The new three-mile road cuts out the congestion at the A550, A540 and M56 junctions. Road users were already seeing the benefits of removing three bottleneck junctions. As well as reducing delays and improving road safety, the improvements would help boost economic regeneration by improving access between England and Wales.

- **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 38 applications compared with 47 last year.

- **Christmas Lights Celebration - Thursday, 27 November 2008**

The Christmas Lights Switch-On Ceremony outside the Greyhound Public House had been a very successful event held during the current Municipal year. There were approximately 500 people in attendance including Father Christmas, and there were refreshments, music and entertainment laid on. The event had been well supported and enjoyed by the community and the £300 profit made had been donated to the Vernon Institute.

The Chairman said a special thank you to Councillor Jean Johnson and the volunteers who sat on the Steering Group, giving up their time to meticulously organise the event. Jean had agreed to lead the organisation of a similar Christmas event in 2009.

- **Family Fun Day - Monday, 5 May 2008**

Approximately 2,000 people attended and enjoyed the Family Fun Day held last spring to mark the official opening of the Golden Jubilee Park by Councillor Andrew Storrar, then Sheriff of Chester. Councillor Ian Humphrey led a Task Group of volunteers who made all of the arrangements. It had been very well organised and demonstrated village life at its very best, bringing the community together.

There had been various stalls including, tombola, cakes, ice cream, refreshments, a bar, games and activities for people of all ages. It proved to

be, without doubt, a very exceptional day and generated income, including donations, of £824, which would be ploughed back into the development. The Chairman congratulated everyone involved.

The Parish Council was willing to support an annual “Family Fun Day” if enough volunteers come forward to help make the necessary arrangements. Anyone interested was asked to let the Council know.

- **Communications**

The Parish Council’s website was regularly updated (www.saughall.gov.uk). Newsletters were published four times a year and local people and village organisations were invited to contribute to it. The Clerk and the Chairman could be contacted by email and parishioners were invited to use this facility to pass on their comments.

(clerk@saughall.gov.uk and chairman@saughall.gov.uk)

- **And finally...**

The Parish Council had experienced another busy year. It had been proactive, made good progress and looked forward to accomplishing even more during the next twelve months. The Chairman thanked those members of the public, who had brought matters to the Council’s attention, or who had come along to Council meetings.

The Chairman informed that it had been a privilege to be chosen by the Council to act in this capacity. She thanked the Vice-Chairman, fellow Councillors and the Clerk for their support and hard work during what had been a very successful year.

Councillor RA Storrar, on behalf of the Council and parishioners, thanked the Chairman and the Clerk for their hard work, time and dedication during the Municipal year.

4 PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Questions and subsequent discussions centred on the following issues:

- The Christmas Lights Switch on Ceremony had been carried out outside the Greyhound Public House and not on land in the ownership of the Council – the Golden Jubilee Park. A parishioner, Mr G Southey considered that the area of the village where the Greyhound was located was dangerous as it was on a road junction. He felt the Christmas tree and the ceremony should be held in the Park and that the Uniform Groups Headquarters should be used for refreshments etc.
- The Chairman agreed to consider these comments at the next Council meeting.
- Councillor RA Storrar informed that he hoped the Council would take steps to get a Traffic Prevention Order on Kingswood Lane.

- Councillor Mrs JE Storrar informed that at the Family Fun Day the Tug of War had proved very popular. She asked the Council to consider a Tug of War one off event.
- Mr G Barnsley congratulated the Council on its quarterly Newsletter and asked it to publish a breakdown of its 2009/10 Budget in its next publication.
- Councillor B Kerr informed that as the Council aspired to Quality Parish Council status it would need to publish the Chairman's Annual Report. He was informed that this had been done this year and in previous years.
- The Chairman introduced and congratulated the new Councillor Mrs K Ford who had won the By Election on 23 April 2009.
- Councillor B Kerr referred to the crumbling roads in the village and informed that it would be appropriate to hold a meeting with Officers of the new Cheshire West and Chester Council to discuss the situation.

The Clerk reminded Councillors that they had agreed to hold such a meeting and arrangements were being made. Also, the Area Maintenance Engineer, Graham Anderton had promised to carry out a pothole patrol.

Councillors agreed to have a walkabout to inspect all village roads and make a list and take photographs of all the potholes in the village.

- The Blue Badge scheme provided a range of parking concessions for people with severe mobility problems who have difficulty using public transport. The scheme operates throughout the UK.

A resident alerted the meeting to the fact that the address for blue badge applications and renewals had changed from a one in Macclesfield to Community Services, PO Box 314, Middlewich, Cheshire. CW7 9EJ.