



SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

Challenges Facing the Council

This Council is coming to the end of five years in office. It has not escaped the problems and uncertainties affecting the wider community and over the coming year, difficult times and hard decisions will face the new Council, to be elected in May, in providing local services.

Under the new Localism Bill, the Government is relying on local community bodies, like parish councils, to act as a tool to empower communities to take on more responsibility. Many new opportunities for local people to positively influence change are anticipated. The Council welcomes the range of new powers, freedoms and flexibilities for local communities and people. In particular, the rightful recognition of the key role of parish councils as being at the heart of its definition of what constitutes a neighbourhood or community.

We want able and community minded people to be elected to the new Council to help drive these changes. In preparation, a Working Party has been meeting to make recommendations to the Council on how it should improve and strengthen its practices and procedures. It must be more efficient and effective so it has capacity to perform a useful community function and play its role at the heart of Localism and the "Big Society".

The formal part of this evening will consist of my report on activities over the last year, a financial report and a question and answer session. Feel free to express your views and explore ideas on how our local community should be run, how services traditionally provided by Councils can be delivered in future and on the "Big Society".

Parish Council Surgeries

We aim to be an effective, transparent and open Council and so we continue to hold Council Surgeries monthly between 10.00am and 10.45am usually outside the Co-op Store on the Saturday immediately before the Council meeting. Dates are published well in advance in Parish Newsletters and on village notice boards.

Business Planning

The Council is currently considering whether to draw up a Business Plan setting out its vision and priorities for the next five years and acknowledging the important role of community groups in the village, who share a common vision. Such a Plan could help the Council fulfil its role within the community and provide a basis for local people to be involved in shaping the future of Saughall.

Parish Planning

Information contained in the current Parish Plan was collected, following consultation with Saughall residents and businesses, over a period of twelve months during 2003/04. This process will begin again once the Localism Bill is enacted and will result in a new Parish/Neighbourhood Plan. It is important that you begin to think about what type of village you want to live in, in the future, looking twenty years or so ahead. This is in line with the concept of "localism".

Finance

We are facing a period of austerity and therefore the Council set a very prudent budget for 2011/12, keeping the Parish Precept at the same level as in 2010/11 at £44.53 per household per Band D property. It is imperative to continue to watch expenditure, obtain value for money and ensure that cost effective services are provided. We always scrutinise the need for any unplanned expenditure and exercise good financial management.

The Council's budgets for the financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11 are as follows:

2010/11	£61,732
2011/12	£62,796

Council Budget 2010/11		Council Budget 2011/12	
Budget Head	Allocation (£)	Budget Head	Allocation (£)
Environment	19,050	Environment	16,866
Admin	26,880	Admin	25,130
Police	11,800	Police	11,800
Neighbourhood Management Team	1,000	Neighbourhood Management Team	1,000
		Community Facilities and Projects	5,000
Contingency	3,002	Contingency	3,000
Total	61,732	Total	62,796

The PCSO Initiative

Safety and security remains the cornerstone of this Council's vision for Saughall. Therefore, I am pleased to report that our PCSO initiative continues to work well. We have had our own PCSO since April 2007 when Mike Butler took up the position. The Council has signed a further three-year agreement with Cheshire Police, running from April 2011 to March 2014 at a cost of £11,800 per annum.

PCSO Wendy Leason has been assigned to Saughall since last November. She has fitted in very well and is doing an excellent job and I would like to thank her for her valuable contribution to the reduction of crime and disorder and the promotion of public reassurance and quality of life in this village.

Homewatch

Saughall Homewatch continues to thrive. Its activities are co-ordinated by Councillor Ian Humphrey. Ian provides a valuable service and I pay tribute to him and thank him for his hard work and commitment to this initiative. Anyone who

would like to join the Homewatch must contact Ian. Joining does not incur any expense and all are welcome.

Neighbourhood Management Team

The Team is pursuing grants and has held a Quiz Night and Fish and Chip Supper to raise money to help fund projects and initiatives to make Saughall a safer place to live. The Team ran a very successful Summer Play Scheme in July 2010 and will be running another one this summer, aided by a grant of £1,700 from the Rural West Area Partnership Board and NHS Western Cheshire Chairman's Discretionary Grants Scheme.

Thank you to all Team members for your tireless efforts, which have made a real difference to Saughall.

Litter Picking Contract

Since April 2011 CWAC has provided Saughall with some litter picking to an agreed standard and disposed of the waste it collects. Consequently, it no longer provides us with a litter picking grant.

We now have a temporary, one year, Litter Picking contract with Roy Hipkiss at a cost of £6,500 to supplement what CWAC provides. This new contract should ensure that Long Lane, Church Road, Hermitage Road and Sea Hill Road are de-littered once a week, along with the full length of Fiddlers Lane. The housing areas are being de-littered once a fortnight by CWAC. The daily de-littering arrangements in respect of the Golden Jubilee Park are included in our contract. We have also included the de-littering of the bus shelters. The waste collected will be disposed off under our contract by Mr Hipkiss.

As both Councils' litter picking arrangements are new they are under review and may be revised so that de-littering activities compliment rather than duplicate each other. Hence the need for the temporary contract that runs to 31 March 2012. A new contract from 1 April 2012 will be drawn up and let next year.

Golden Jubilee Park

During the year the old multi-play unit and slide has been removed at a cost of £258 and replaced at a cost of £9,763. £4,000 of grants from CWAC helped fund this. Also, due to mindless vandalism a new cable, seat and spring costing £567.53 were installed on the Aerial Runway.

Via a Joint Use Agreement, Saughall Cricket Club maintains the pitches and play areas within the Park at a price to be agreed annually (2010 - £2,500).

The drainage in the car park is still not working and in the winter, when there was a lot of rain and snow, it was waterlogged. The new Council will need to tackle this problem in the summer by commissioning further drainage work.

The Council is working with the Planners at CWAC on a design for a permanent sports pavilion. This project is in its infancy and is dependant on the Council, village sporting organisations and other prospective users working together in partnership to attract the necessary funding.

Vernon Institute

The Council has built up and maintains a savings fund which it uses to provide grants towards the costs of improving the fabric of the Vernon Institute, a listed building and an important community facility and village meeting point. The Council has contributed £1,140 towards the cost of gas pipes and a new boiler this year. It has also donated £1000 towards the refurbishment of the clock tower.

The Greyhound Inn

The Greyhound Inn closed last autumn and has been standing empty ever since. Local residents raised concerns about its dilapidated state and so the Clerk contacted its owners Enterprise Inns Plc to request a meeting with them to discuss their plans. The meeting was held on 7 February 2011 at the Vernon Institute and although it wasn't a public meeting, a number of villagers did turn up.

Enterprise Inns have confirmed their commitment to the long term future of the pub and are seeking to recruit a suitable licensee. Their intention was to improve the pub for the local community and re-open it at Easter. However, we have now learnt that the start date for the work has been slightly delayed due to other jobs overrunning but we are assured that work will commence within the next couple of weeks. Unfortunately, this means that the pub won't be open until mid May.

Traffic Congestion at All Saints Primary School

The Council is still concerned by the traffic congestion on Church Road and in the Co-op Store's car park caused by parents dropping off and picking up their children from School. We have worked with PCSO Wendy Leason, the School and CWAC's Highways Officers to discourage parents from transporting their children by car. We remain interested in supporting events like Walk to School Month and Walk to School Week. We do have concerns over the School's Transport Plan.

Former Ridings Infant School Building

The Clerk has written to the Secretary of State for Education setting out the Council's objection to the sale of the former school building on the grounds that it could be put to good community use.

Notwithstanding this, it is expected that the site will eventually be sold for housing development so the point has also been made to its owners, CWAC, that the village has not received any material benefits or planning gain from any previous developments in the village. If Saughall is to receive a benefit this time our preference is for help to carry out further improvements to leisure and recreational facilities within the Golden Jubilee Park.

Highways Issues

We spend a lot of time at Council meetings talking about traffic congestion, problems with the buses, damage to grass verges, parking, potholes and speeding cars. We work with the Police, the Highways Authority and the bus companies to try to remedy these problems. Councillors and volunteers have been trained to use a speed gun and a speed indicator device, which we borrow from the Principal Authority. We still aspire to meet the criteria laid down to become a community speed watch area.

Remembrance Sunday

We have received expressions of thanks and appreciation in respect of the Remembrance Sunday Service organised by the Council, for the first time, following complaints that remembrance of all who suffered and died in conflict in the service of their country and all those who mourn them was not marked sufficiently in this village. I attended the service at the war memorial, as did other Parish Councillors and had the honour of laying a Royal British Legion poppy wreath on the Council's behalf. It is hoped that the Council will continue to take the lead to ensure that this commemoration continues.

Wain House Re-development

Chester and District Housing Trust wanted to call the Wain House re-development Oakwood. Following representations by the Council it has now agreed to call it Wain Court. We did not want to lose the old name from the village completely.

Anyone who is interested in the new properties must contact the Housing Trust.

Affordable Housing Scheme

CWAC completed an external tender process last year resulting in Chester and District Housing Trust being appointed to the scheme. It is now working with the Parish Council to shape it and agree physical and technical elements. We have told the Housing Trust that we would like the proposed development to be called Thomas Wedge Close.

Planning

The Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications in its area. The Council considers all applications at Planning Committee meetings. In the course of this Municipal year the Council has dealt with 24 applications compared with 30 last year. The number of plans being submitted each year is decreasing, probably due to the economic downturn. Members of the public are very welcome to attend these meetings. Our observations are sent to CWAC advising, where necessary, on local information and issues.

Communications

The Council's website is regularly updated (www.saughall.gov.uk) to keep people abreast of our activities etc. We are considering carrying out improvements to it to make it more modern and user-friendly and we are exploring social networking. We publish a quarterly newsletter and local people and village organisations are actively encouraged to contribute to it and/or advertise in it. I am told parishioners enjoy reading it. The Clerk can be contacted by email so please use this facility to send her items and photographs for inclusion in future issues and to pass on your comments to the new Council. (clerk@saughall.gov.uk)

Thanks

I would like to thank our Parish Councillors for all the time and effort they have devoted to their duties. They have done this on an entirely voluntary basis and every Councillor is concerned for the well-being of the parish and has the best interests of the village at heart.

Helen Thorniley–Jones resigned from the Council last December because of personal reasons. We were sorry to see her step down but accepted her reasons for doing so. I would like to thank Helen for her contributions and hard work over the years she was a Councillor.

I would also like to thank Andrew Storrar, Brian Crowe and Eleanor Johnson our three Cheshire West and Chester Councillors for all their hard work and dedication to the village who together with Parish Councillors, have focused on the standard and quality of services CWAC has delivered to our residents. New electoral arrangements come into force at the Borough Council elections in May. There will be a new single-member Saughall and Mollington ward. Also, all 14 Parish Council seats are up for election.

Thank you to Tony Leach our Parish Paths Warden, for walking all the public and permissible footpaths in Saughall and Shotwick Park and reporting problems encountered to CWAC, Helen Cakebread for her work as our Tree and Environmental Warden, our Internal Auditor Bob Salisbury and our Responsible Financial Officer, Graham Hudspeth for their work on the accounts and for attending Council meetings and finally thank you to our Parish Clerk, Shirley Hudspeth for her contributions, advice and support during the years I have been Chairman of this Council.

Also, many thanks to those parishioners, who have helped us by bringing matters to our attention, and/or who have come along to our meetings.

In Conclusion

We have had a very busy year and have done our best to discharge our duty on behalf of the village. We may not get it right all the time and we may not always win but our Parish Council is committed to building on its successes and improving services for the benefit of the people of Saughall. The Council may have different political philosophies between its Members but when we enter the Council meeting all Members have one common aim – **improving Saughall.**

Jenny Young
Chairman
11 April 2011

Parish Councillor's Contact Details

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