



SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

Introduction

This is my fifth Annual Report and I believe that we continue to provide Saughall and Shotwick Park with value for money in respect of the work we do on the community's behalf. The Council has met each month to manage particular matters pertaining to the parish as well as its usual business of oversight of the highways, footpaths, street lighting, and the conservation area. We continue to enjoy good working relationships with other bodies serving the community within the parish.

Councillor Ian Humphrey

In November 2012 it was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Councillor Ian Humphrey. Ian had been a parish councillor since November 2005. He was a stalwart supporter of the community and a defender of all the parish's amenities. It is the Council's intention to commemorate Ian's contribution to the parish and to record the high regard in which he was held, by having a road in the new Lodge Lane housing development named after him. Members were also sad to hear of the death of Ian's wife, Philamena, (who was a former parish councillor), in March 2013.

New Councillors

We welcomed two new Councillors during the year. Howard Jennings was elected unopposed and took up the vacant seat that has existed on the Council since May 2011 when 13 of the 14 seats were filled following an uncontested election. Councillor Jennings attended his first meeting on Monday, 5 November 2012. Jane Edwards was elected onto the Council to fill the vacant seat (following Ian's death) at a By Election on 21 February 2013.

Finance

The Council has set its budget for 2013/14 and kept the precept the same as for 2012/13 which means that the Council Tax will, for the second year running, is £54.98 per household per Band D property.

The Government has changed the way in which Council Tax is charged, effectively reducing the tax base. To offset this Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) provided a grant of £6,032, the amount equal to the tax base reduction for the Council.

We asked CWaC for a Parish Precept of £58,389 for 2013/14. The Parish Council's budget amounts to £76,906. Budget comparisons are set out below:

2012/13	£66,296
2013/14	£76,906

Council Budget 2012/13	
Budget Head	Allocation (£)
Environment	16,366
Admin	29,130
Police	11,800
Neighbourhood Management Team	1,000
Community Facilities and Projects	5,000
Contingency	3,000
Total	66,296

Council Budget 2013/14	
Budget Head	Allocation (£)
Environment	18,800
Admin	20,250
Annual Payments	6,213
Community Facilities Fund	13,343
Police	11,800
Neighbourhood Management Team	500
Uniformed Groups' HQ Rental	500
Community Action Projects	1,000
War Memorial Fund/New Roll of Honour	1,500
Contingency	3,000
Total	76,906

Protection of the Local Green Belt

The green belt was introduced to prevent urban sprawl, to stop Chester joining with Ellesmere Port and Merseyside and to protect the city from swallowing neighbouring villages.

The Council continues to campaign and do all in its power to protect the green belt for future generations. This year there have been two major threats to the Chester green belt:

- CwaC consulted on rolling back the green belt around Chester to build 2000 new houses; and
- A planning application for 2,300 flats in the green belt between Blacon and Saughall was submitted to the Planning Authority and was refused.

Planning

One of the Council's primary aims is to encourage the planning authority, CwaC to support sensible development, maintaining the openness of the green belt. The Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications and this year it has considered and submitted observations on 27 applications, compared with 26 last year.

Parish Council Surgeries

We aim to be an effective, transparent and open Council and so we continue to hold Council Surgeries monthly at various times and locations around the village. Details are published well in advance on village notice boards.

Parish Planning

We have made good progress on the review and refresh of our Parish Plan and the Refreshed Plan and Action Plan were adopted by the Council at a Special Council meeting on 25 April 2013. The thoughts, concerns, observations and needs of parishioners were collected by a survey, collated and analysed. I would like to thank Nigel Crossley who has led this work for his time and commitment.

The refreshed Parish Plan will have the opportunity to influence a wide range of organisations, such as grant providers and CWaC.

Litter Picking

The Council pays for the Golden Jubilee Park to be delittered regularly. It also monitors the state of the village but it is CWaC's responsibility to keep the village clean and tidy. Any problem areas are reported and CWaC is expected to take the appropriate action. Anyone can report litter problems by ringing Tel No. 0300 123 8 123.

The PCSO Initiative

Safety and security remains the cornerstone of this Council's vision for Saughall. We have had our own PCSO since April 2007 and this arrangement continues to work well. Consequently, we have signed a new Partnership Service Level Agreement with Cheshire Police and intend to continue to contribute to the cost of providing a PCSO in Saughall for the next three years. The cost remains at £11,800 per annum and we consider this represents extremely good value for money.

Homewatch

Saughall Homewatch continues to thrive. Its activities were expertly co-ordinated by Ian Humphrey until November. Howard Jennings is now carrying out this work and aims to provide a valuable service. I thank him for volunteering to fulfil this role. If you would like to join the Homewatch please contact Howard. Joining is free and all are welcome.

Neighbourhood Management Team

This Team takes action to solve problems within the community and works with local partners to improve the local environment and quality of life. It arranges and runs popular play schools in the summer and at Easter and helps fund play days run in conjunction with CWaC.

Saughall is again on the route of the Chester Half Marathon on 12 May 2013. The Neighbourhood Management Team will be looking after the drinks stand and needs helpers. Tony Summers is Chief Marshall and is also seeking volunteers to assist him.

Thank you to all Team members for their tireless efforts, which continue to make a real difference to Saughall.

Golden Jubilee Park

The play areas continue to be well used and have not required any major maintenance. Ian Humphrey and Andrew Storrar carried out some work in the car park and, fingers crossed; it seems to have solved the flooding problem.

The Parish Council is working with volunteers, as the Saughall Community and Sports Pavilion Committee, to produce a specification for an affordable and suitable community building as well as provision for the diverse sporting and leisure facilities requested by parishioners. This project is dependant on attracting the necessary funding.

The Council is also considering applying for funding for a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and we will be carrying out further consultations on this proposal to establish if there is a need.

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, an important community facility and village meeting point.

The Vernon Institute Management Committee has requested a funding contribution towards the cost of alterations to the small hall (library). It has built storage cupboards, moved existing cupboards, removed library boxes from the walls, created a serving hatch from the kitchen, fitted kitchen units and will decorate. The Council agreed at its Special meeting on 25 April 2013 to contribute £3,350 towards the cost of this work.

Car Parking in the Village

Throughout the year several residents had expressed concern about the increasing car parking problems around the village – particularly outside the Co-op Stores and All Saints Primary School. The Council has considered a number of options to help address and alleviate the problems including articles in the Parish Council Newsletter. However, its powers are very limited in respect of ‘controlling’ or enforcing parking issues but we will continue to monitor the situation and liaise with others (local authority and other agencies if necessary) to try and help the situation.

Highways Issues

We continue to spend a lot of time at Council meetings on 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. We want a Twenty’s Plenty zone in Saughall. CWaC is progressing this initiative and Saughall is on its list.

Affordable Housing - Lodge Lane

Planning permission has been granted for, 18 properties, providing a mix of two and three bedroom houses and two bedroom bungalows. Rapid progress has been made and it is expected that work will begin on site in June 2013.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee

The Council invited all the various clubs and groups in Saughall to make proposals on how it would spend up to a maximum of £500 on a project, which must benefit the local community, to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Cheques for £500 were presented to representatives of:

- The Vernon Institute Management Committee to help fund the provision of Diamond Jubilee Planters and flowers outside the entrance to the Vernon Institute; and
- All Saints Parochial Church Council to help fund the provision of a gateway.

Supporting Village Events

The Council is pleased to support various community events throughout the year.

- Remembrance Sunday

We have arranged Remembrance Sunday services for the last three years. I attended the service last November at the war memorial, as did other Parish Councillors, and I had the honour of laying a Royal British Legion poppy wreath on the Council's behalf. The Council will continue to take the lead on this important community event.

- Music in the Park – 4 June 2012

This was an excellent community event, organised to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Over 1,000 Saughall residents and their families were entertained by numerous talented local bands. There was non-stop music while people picnicked and lazed in the sun, though many enjoyed dancing to the music. Refreshment stalls were run by local people and a bouncy castle entertained the children. Plans are now progressing well in respect of a similar event to be held on **Sunday, 26 May 2013 from 3pm**. Thank you to everyone who helps to make these events successful.

- Christmas Celebrations

The Christmas Lights and Fayre continue to be very well supported each year. There are lots of stalls and a Santa procession through the village.

New Website – www.saughall.gov.uk

The Council now has a fresh-looking and newly-redesigned website. This work was completed by the University of Chester's Informatics Centre at a total cost of £1,250. The new design features a much-improved navigation system based on clear menus and enables you to find information about our village much more easily. New additions include a 'news' feature on the front page where we post items as we hear about them and a photo album where we post snapshots of events as they happen. We welcome feedback on the new design as well as additional items and detail for inclusion on the website - both, please, to the Clerk email: clerk@saughall.gov.uk

The Parish Council is now on Twitter, thanks to Kathy Ford. You can find [@SaughallPC](https://twitter.com/SaughallPC) easily by visiting our website and clicking on the Twitter link.

So in Conclusion

The Parish Council's goals for the coming year: Are to

- as always, to seek ways to better engage with our residents;
- continue to provide value for money in all our activities;
- assign our priorities and then drive our projects and initiatives forward; and
- robustly defend Saughall and Shotwick Park's interests.

And finally –

Thank you all – the team of Parish Councillors who really do the best for Saughall and Shotwick Park; you give up your own time to make it a great place to live. We have achieved a lot this last year and I thank you for your support throughout the year. I would also like to thank Brian Crowe our CWaC Councillor for keeping us up to date with what is happening at Borough level.

Thank you to Tony Leach and Dennis Holman our Parish Paths Wardens, for walking all of our public and permissible footpaths and reporting any problems 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. The work of the Parish Council is hugely varied, the Annual Report can only give a flavour, and without the hard work of our Clerk, Shirley Hudspeth, I am sure some things would fall by the way, my/our thanks to her.

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.

Jenny Young
Chairman
29 April 2013

Parish Council's Contact Details

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