

MINUTES OF AN OPEN MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH COUNCIL, CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY AND PARISHIONERS held on 7 December 2013 in the Uniformed Groups' Headquarters, Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs J Edwards
Councillor Mrs K Ford
Councillor DF Holman
Councillor H Jennings (Homewatch Co-ordinator)
Councillor Mrs J Johnson
Councillor Mrs J Knox
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor Mrs D Whitton
Councillor Mrs JM Young (in the Chair)

Cheshire West and Chester Councillor Brian Crowe
PCSO Wendy Leason
PC Paul Taylor, Beat Manager

and approximately 40 Parishioners

1. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting called to discuss issues that arose in the Golden Jubilee Park.

2. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman provided a brief overview of the Golden Jubilee Park and the sports and recreational facilities that had been provided there in recent years for the local community's use.

The purpose of this meeting was to be proactive and to discuss with the police how the problems and anti social activity experienced in the Park in the past could be addressed going forward. It was hoped that the Police could come up with ideas to alleviate local people's concerns.

The Parish Council had been trying to attract external funding since September 2012 to provide a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) in the Park. This project was entirely reliant on grant aid and the Council had recently announced that it had been successful with two external funding applications so the MUGA could now be installed in the Golden Jubilee Park. The MUGA was an excellent facility that would be available for local people to use for sports, play and exercise. It could help improve skills and fitness levels and the Council had been very lucky to get this funding.

Attendees were then invited to present their concerns/issues/views etc.

3. PARISHIONERS' REPRESENTATIONS

A number of attendees spoke out at the meeting and the points raised included the following:

- The Parish Council has provided superb play facilities including a goal end. However, when older children want to use the goal end younger children are pushed aside.
- There has been a lot of low level anti social behaviour and vandalism in the Park which has taken Saughall Cricket Club many hours to correct.
- The MUGA is being situated in the wrong place and will provide a screen for nuisance youth activity. It should be sited at the bottom of Seahill Road and be looked after by Saughall Colts.
{It was noted that this was not possible as the recreation land on Seahill Road (which belongs to the Vernon Institute), is in Wales. One of the grants obtained is for projects in Cheshire as it is being provided by the principal authority (Cheshire West and Cheshire Council) and the other grant is off WREN and for projects in England.}
- Some of the children who play in the Park use bad language and people living close by have to ask them to modify it. If the MUGA goes ahead this will get worse and children who live in Long Lane will not be able to play in their gardens.
- No one wanted to volunteer to help run the Youth Club.
{Conversations had been had with officers at Cheshire West and Chester Council and funding and volunteers may be available soon.}
- Those living in houses on the periphery of the Park considered that their quality of life could be greatly affected by the MUGA.
- There is a drug problem in the Park.
- Some people consider the Park to be unsafe and will not let their children play in it.
- The MUGA could attract youth problems and there were a number of elderly people living in Long Lane who could be greatly affected by this.
- The MUGA could attract people from outside the village, particularly from Blacon and could make the problems being experienced in the Park worse.
{It was noted that Blacon already had a MUGA and there was also one in Upton. The Police reported that there had never been any issues with either of them}
- There was a concern that in the future lighting could be installed in the MUGA.
- There were concerns about gangs and it was perceived that they would use the MUGA as a place to take drugs. They came to the village now on mopeds.
{The Police informed that they currently interacted and engaged with this group of youngsters. This area was extensively policed and Saughall was probably the best policed in the Chester area. The Police took a very proactive and positive stance working with these youngsters}
- It was accepted that Saughall was well policed but there had been windows put out. There were concerns that as the Park was not policed 24/7 there could be issues. People living in the environs of the Park were aware of the problems in the Park. They went unreported because people did not have time 'to sit on the phone'.

{The Police informed that they were in attendance to discuss how the problems could be addressed now.}

- Local people did not know about the Council's MUGA initiative and considered it to be a fait accompli. People had gone round the village with a petition against the MUGA and found that those whose doors they knocked on did not know about it.

{Letters had been put through letter boxes of those living in close proximity to the Park informing of the MUGA initiative. The last four editions of the Parish Council Newsletter had contained information about the MUGA project. It was also included as a standard item on Council agendas and progress was minuted. The Chairman had also made reference to the project in her Annual Report. During the Parish Plan process and its recent refresh, Parish surveys had been carried out and parishioners had asked the Parish Council to provide facilities for the youth of the village as there was little for them to do.}

- Not everyone reads the Parish Council's Newsletter.
{It is important that parishioners follow what the Parish Council is doing.}
- The Parish Council has no right to make a decision to provide a MUGA without proper consultation.
- If the MUGA was not supervised 'big boys would rule'.
- Not all the issues in the Park were associated with youths. People pick the daffodils and walk their dogs in the Park which is not allowed.
- The Guides had experienced problems whilst meeting in the Uniformed Groups' Headquarters and some children no longer attended because of the bad behaviour of those causing these problems (shouting and climbing on the roof). They considered that they would not be able to use the MUGA because of the behaviour of others. They did not report the incidents because they perceived nothing would be done. This year they had kept the Guides inside.
- It would have been prudent to issue questionnaires before applying for grants to provide a MUGA that local people did not want.
- A bin had been burnt, a bench had been destroyed and there was a lot of broken glass in the Park. The MUGA facility could mean that the situation would get worse.
- If the MUGA is installed in the Park it must be supervised.
- Upton High School had got 110 Saughall children together. Councillor H Jennings had provided an overview of the MUGA project. Only eight children had been already aware of the MUGA plan and only 15 went to the Park to play.
- It is 17-18 year olds that cause the problems in the Park. They keep the little ones away.
- The Head Teacher at All Saints C of E Primary School had provided a letter of support for the MUGA and had indicated that the School would love to use it.
- It was perceived that there had been no consultation on the MUGA.
- Anti social behaviour was not reported because people were put through to an answering machine. Also, it costs 15p to make the telephone call.
- There has been a lot of trouble in the Park and there will be more. In twelve months time, it was perceived that if the MUGA project went ahead parishioners will tell the Parish Council 'we told you this would happen!'.

- Who will move youths on so other children can have a turn with the MUGA?
- We have a lovely green area. Why replace it with a tarmac, caged area?
- Why can't we use the grants to improve the facilities the village already has?
{It was noted that the grants were specifically for a MUGA and nothing else.}
- There had been four MUGA consultation meetings but the numbers of those who had attended were not available at the meeting.
{It was noted that the funding providers had been happy with the consultation that had been carried out.}
- The level of anti social behaviour in the Golden Jubilee Park being reported provides a good case to close it and build houses on it.
- The Parish Council is out of touch with its local community.
- There has been consultation with All Saints C of E School and the MUGA plans have been deposited there for a week.
- It would be a serious matter if, at this late stage, the Parish Council refused the external funding being offered for the MUGA. Such action may mean that funding for the Vernon Institute and the Community/Sports Pavilion will not be provided by WREN.
- This was considered scaremongering, blackmailing people to have a MUGA that they did not want so that they could receive external funding for the Community/Sports Pavilion.
- People were appalled by some of the comments made and were frightened to bring children to the Park. This situation must be addressed by the Police.
- The MUGA plans should have been available at the meeting.
- Why was the MUGA being located near to houses?
{The MUGA had to be in a place where what is going on there is in full view.}

4. WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

The Chairman informed that the Minutes of this meeting would be presented to the next meeting of the Council scheduled for 7pm on Monday, 6 January 2014 in the Vernon Institute for its consideration.

5. THANK YOU

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting and for the contributions made.