

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK  
PARISH COUNCIL held on 23 April 2001 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs M Anderson  
Councillor Mrs BW Bell  
Councillor H Dobson  
Councillor B Kerr (in the Chair)  
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey  
Councillor RA Storrar  
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar  
Councillor A Warrington  
Councillor Mrs D Whitton  
Councillor Mrs J Young

PC G Cooper  
County Councillor D Rowlands  
Mr C Mellwrick – Homewatch Co-ordinator  
Mr C Wynne-Eaton – Tree Warden

5 Members of the Public  
1 Member of the Press

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Bailey and Evans.

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Council held on 17 May 2000 be confirmed as a correct record.

3 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman welcomed parishioners to their Annual Assembly and then presented his report setting out the Council's achievements over the past year, the detail of ongoing initiatives and aims and aspirations for the future.

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

(a) Sports and Recreation

? Millennium Park Land

The Council still hoped to purchase 22 acres of meadow land from Cheshire County Council for recreational purposes. Unfortunately, there was little progress to report.

Councillors had met with the Director of Community Development and the County Property Manager at County Hall to try to find a way for the Parish Council to obtain the land at a price it could afford.

The County Council was having internal discussions on options and possibilities for such a purchase to go ahead. It had elections in May 2001 and therefore the Parish Council had decided to review the situation once the new County Council was in place.

#### ?Fiddlers Lane Playing Field

The Council had provided safety surfaces for all of the play equipment in the playing field. A new see-saw had been purchased just over a year ago and the roundabout had been repaired. The equipment was inspected on a weekly basis and was currently in good working order.

The equipment and fencing did need painting. The Council was in the process of obtaining quotations for this work with a view to commissioning someone to carry it out in the next few months.

The field did have drainage problems and Chester City Council had agreed to rectify them. Work would begin soon to this end.

The Council in an attempt to encourage youngsters to use the field for their ball games had awarded its Grounds Maintenance Contract again to Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council. This year from 1 April to 31 October 2001 the grass would be cut on a weekly basis and the hedges pruned as appropriate at a total cost of £2,285.

All work carried out, or soon to be, ensured that the village children and indeed those visiting had access to excellent play facilities.

#### (b) Street Cleaning

Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council had again been awarded the Parish Council's street cleaning contract for a further year. The contract would run from 1 May 2001 to 30 April 2002 when the Parish Council would again review its street cleaning arrangements.

The Council had increased the number of hours of delittering and emptying of litter bins per week. The village would now be visited three days per week (Monday, Wednesday and Fridays) by 1 man and a compaction vehicle to pick up litter. A further 1 hour would be spent inspecting the children's play equipment and on delittering the Fiddlers Lane Playing Field. The total cost of this contract would be £7,800.

This was a large slice of the Council's budget but was necessary to keep the village clean and tidy. The cost could be significantly reduced if a minority of people did not drop litter!

#### (c) Crime Prevention

The Council had this year established a Crime and Disorder Committee as a mechanism for liaison with the Homewatch and Police over matters of common concern.

Parish Council's had the power to fund crime prevention measures. The Council had discussed installing CCTV cameras and paying for additional policing for Saughall. Currently the Council was providing the Homewatch with modest funding - £500 had been earmarked for this purpose in next year's budget.

(d) Traffic Calming

Concerns had been raised over the volume of traffic using the A5117/A540 roundabout. There were plans to improve the junction in the long term. If there was an accident on the A5117 motorists would divert through the village.

A survey had been commissioned by the DETR and it was hoped that it would clearly demonstrate the problem. In the short term the Council wanted traffic lights installed.

The Welsh Development Agency had recently concluded an Inquiry into industrial development on Deeside. The Council was opposed and concerned over the extra traffic that would be generated and had made representations to this effect. It had commented that if the development was to go ahead improved infrastructure and traffic calming measures would need to be in place. The Council was supporting Puddington and District Parish Council and other organisations on this issue.

The Chairman also reported that following a number of accidents at the junction of the A5117 and Long Lane, Cheshire County Council had agreed to carry out a feasibility study and the results were awaited.

(e) Voluntary Organisations

The Council continued to support a number of voluntary organisations. It had advertised for leaders for the Uniformed Groups in its newsletter. It had also assisted the Youth Project in the same way.

Disappointment was expressed over the Council's inability to get the Youth Parish Council off the ground. It had not given up yet and recognised the need to engage with the young people of the village.

The Council was also keen to work with the Vernon Institute Management Committee to bring about improvements to the Village Hall, etc. It was important that the premises were maintained to an appropriate standard as they were an essential community asset. There had been communications problems but they were now being addressed.

(f) Village Shops and Chemist

One of the Parish Council's principal stated aims included in its Five Year Plan of Action was to support local shops. It was encouraging villagers to make use of these valuable assets and was promoting them in its newsletter on a regular basis.

(g) Public Transport

Public transport was being monitored but the Council believed that the village had a very good bus service provided by Chester City Transport.

(h) Street Lighting

The Council continued to review street lighting once a year. It had a priority list and would decide shortly where to concentrate its efforts.

(i) Public Participation

The Council was keen to encourage public participation. Ten minutes had been set aside at the beginning of each Council meeting for public speaking. It had five notice boards in the village on which information was posted on a regular basis. The Parish Room had been re-established on Fiddlers Lane and Councillor's Surgeries had been introduced on Saturday mornings. This provided an opportunity for parishioners to feed in comments and air grievances/problems and if it was warranted appropriate action would be taken.

(j) Planning

The Council took its role as a consultee very seriously. Chester City Council, the Planning Authority, did take notice of the Parish Council's observations. The Parish Council considered every planning application made within the parish boundary and its primary concerns were to protect the green belt and ensure no conflict with the rest of the village.

(k) Parish Precept

In order to provide services and carry out its work the Council had raised a precept. This year's budget had been set at £36,505 and the precept was £28,094. This was a significant increase on the previous year but the Council aimed to provide value for money.

(l) Policing

PC Gareth Cooper, the new Rural Police Officer, introduced himself and provided a brief outline of his background and experience to date, with both the CID and the Drug Squad.

The Chairman welcomed PC Cooper to the meeting and informed him that the Council would like to see him at as many of its Council meetings as possible and particularly at the Crime and Disorder Committee where it was hoped he would play a key role.

4 QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

- (a) Mr G Southey raised concerns over the bus stop at the Peg. There was an 18 inch drop to the road and there was often standing water.

The Chairman agreed to look at the problem.

- (b) An update in respect of the sale of the farm on Hermitage Road was requested.

The Chairman informed that the Council was aware that it was being sold and was monitoring the slurry situation.

- (c) Mr Wynne-Eaton noted that a large proportion of the Council's budget was spent on street cleaning and asked if some funds could be used to educate children not to drop litter.

The Chairman informed that the Parish Council did ask the schools to discuss litter problems and remedies with children and leaflets were provided on occasion. He had noticed himself that there was a lot of litter in the grounds of the Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School and requested that the matter be raised by the Governor representative.

- (d) It was considered that the shopkeepers were letting their bins get over full.

The Chairman agreed that representations be made to those concerned.

- (e) The Chairman outlined the street cleaning arrangements that had been agreed with Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council for the following year. It was noted that the village would be visited three times a week and various litter routes had been agreed to keep Saughall as litter free as possible.

- (f) Mr McIlwrick asked what provision there was to sweep the pavements and what powers did the Council have to make villagers trim their hedges.

The Chairman informed that the Parish Council did not have statutory power in this regard but it could coerce and encourage residents to tidy up. Any trees, shrubs or bushes etc. that obstructed the pavements would be reported to the Highway Authority who could take action. If people were uncooperative the District Engineer could carry out the work necessary and charge for it.

- (g) Councillor RA Storrar thanked the Tree Warden for the work he had undertaken. It was much appreciated and it was making a difference in the village.

- (h) Concerns were raised over the state of the road surfaces on Fiddlers Lane and Long Lane.

The Chairman informed that the District Engineer was prepared to carry out temporary work. The wet weather had not helped the situation. Members were requested to telephone the County Council's Guilden Sutton Depot (01244 603479) if any potholes developed in future.

County Councillor David Rowlands informed that it was widely acknowledged that road repair and maintenance was under funded.

- (i) Councillor RA Storrar raised the problem of flooding on Long Lane near to Mr Bland's house.

It was agreed that the Parish Council would make representations to the County Council in an attempt to alleviate the problem.

- (j) The Council was asked for its views on the Old Bakery at 2 Hermitage Road.

The Chairman reported that the Council had serious concerns about the planning application submitted and on the unhelpful way that Chester City Council officers had dealt with the Parish Council's concerns. Planning consent had been given. The property was now up for sale and the planning consent was transferable to the new owner. There was nothing the Parish Council could do about it.

- (k) Councillor Warrington told the meeting that the Doctors did not use the local chemist shop to dispense prescriptions.

It was noted that it was for patients to decide where to get their prescriptions filled.

- (l) Mr Southey asked if a replacement shelter could be provided at the Terminus and made reference to the free shelter the Council had been offered (by the County Council) and rejected.

The Chairman reported that the previous bus shelter had been demolished because it had been made unsafe by vandals. The bus shelter had been a magnet for anti-social behaviour by youths.

Representations had been made by local residents and the Council had agreed that the bus shelter be not replaced.

The Council had sympathy for bus users but it was pointed out that passengers could arrive and step straight onto the bus. If it was late the next stop at Greenway had a shelter and was only 100 yards away.

- (j) The Council was asked to consider the possibility of installing a CCTV camera at the Terminus.

Members agreed that there was a good chance that it would be damaged. Youths would misbehave outside the camera's range and someone would need to view the film on a regular basis.

If the CCTV camera could be linked to the City loop it might be feasible. Technology was not yet that far advanced.

- (k) Councillor Dobson requested that the Council give consideration to making arrangements for the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

Mr McIlwrick informed that there was no funding left in the Millennium Committee's account. Cheques had been distributed. The Committee would consider what arrangements could be made next year. The Council would discuss the Jubilee at its budget meeting and decide whether or not to allocate funds to celebrate/commemorate it.