

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE
held on 19 September 2001 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs M Anderson
Councillor A Bailey
Councillor Mrs B Bell
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor Mrs D Whitton

Invited Members: Councillor H Dobson
Councillor B Kerr (in the Chair)
Councillor RA Storrar

In Attendance: PC Gareth Cooper

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Councillor SS Evans
Mr C McIlwrick
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor Mrs J Young
Inspector M Clewith

24 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

Subject to the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 May 2001 being numbered appropriately and Live being replaced with Life (Minute No 20, 5th paragraph) they be confirmed as a correct record.

25 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute No 21 - Crime and Disorder in Saughall, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)

At the last meeting it had been agreed that the Clerk would write to Mr Paul Durham, Chief Executive of Chester City Council, and Inspector Clewith informing them that the Parish Council and the Homewatch, jointly, would like an early meeting with both of them to discuss ABCs and how we could all work in partnership to tackle anti-social behaviour.

The Clerk had acted accordingly and had received an e-mail on 29 May 2001 from Mr Stuart Harris of Chester City Council who had informed her that Mr Durham had asked him to deal with the Parish Council's request to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Mr Harris had informed that he had asked Chester City Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator and Community Safety Officer to look at the request and that he would get back to the Clerk with some possible dates to discuss a partnership approach with the Police, Homewatch and Parish Council.

The Clerk reported that she had met Mr Harris in the course of her work at Warrington Town Hall in July 2001 and had reminded him of his undertaking. He had promised to respond soon but had not.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to follow this matter up with Mr Harris.

26 GRASSED AMENITY AREAS – “NO BALL GAMES”
IN PURSUIT OF A BYELAW

Councillor RA Storrar presented the Committee with a copy of a Model Byelaw prepared by Chester City Council's Legal Services for consideration.

It was noted that a consultation process would need to be gone through before the proposed byelaw could be considered. However, Members felt that the petitions received from residents of Greenway and Saughall Hey in the Summer would show the strength of feeling of residents.

RESOLVED:

That the Model Byelaw be the subject of discussion at the next meeting of the Council scheduled for 1 October 2001.

27 POLICING IN SAUGHALL

PC Cooper and Members embarked on a full and frank discussion of policing issues in general and considered various quality of life aspects. It was agreed that “Saughall is a village with attitude determined that residents quality of life is maintained.”

It was noted that crime figures were down in the village. Saughall was a strong Homewatch area and this was reflected in the crime figures. The Homewatch Co-ordinator and representatives were congratulated on their actions. Vandalism at the schools had reduced. It was reported however that offensive graffiti was now on the side of the scout hut in the Fiddlers Lane Playing Field. The Clerk agreed to contact the Graffiti Busters to see if they would be willing to remove it.

The Constabulary had a proactive approach to drugs and substance abuse was not seen as a major problem in Saughall at the current time. There were some concerns however, PC Cooper was aware of them and would continue to keep under surveillance certain areas of the village, investigating when appropriate.

One of the most significant problems which had led to a reduction in quality of life for villagers over the past few years was with nuisance youths. Nuisance youth activity had been the bane of many residents lives at one time or another. PC Cooper was aware of this and had been moving young people on when they congregated en-mass in various parts of the village.

Often local people felt intimidated by such gatherings and perceived danger. It was acknowledged however that on the whole young people liked to get out and meet their friends and meant no-one any harm. PC Cooper considered that if the youth of the village had somewhere appropriate to meet it would alleviate the problem by ensuring that they met in an acceptable place and did not annoy local residents.

He had undertaken some research, asking young people what facilities they would like to see in the village for themselves. He had also seen what was being provided in neighbouring Blacon and passed around copies of the details of the scheme taking shape there.

Young people frequently said they had nowhere to go and nowhere to call their own. In many cases the young people of today had lost the skill of previous generations to entertain themselves. Moving groups of youngsters on when often they were just enjoying each others company alienated and disenchanted them.

Basically what young people needed in the village was a weather proof shelter positioned in a safe place with appropriate street lighting. They also required a hard surface on which to kick a ball without getting covered in mud and perhaps some kind of sports wall with basketball facilities etc.

It was noted that some facilities for young people were provided at the Drop-in Centre near to the Vernon Institute but only on Monday evenings. Mrs Pattison who ran this Youth Project had informed that the two project workers who had been seconded from Blacon's Delta Project would be withdrawn from October 2001. Without volunteers to help her Mrs Pattison had no alternative but to close the Centre. Endless appeals had been made in an attempt to get help for this worthwhile project but no-one had come forward.

Any facilities provided for young people would have cost implications and could effect future Parish precepts if grant aid could not be found. Members were aware that landfill tax funding was available for certain projects, as were community safety grants. It might also be possible to get local businesses to offer assistance and support.

At the present time the Parish Council's only land asset was the Fiddlers Lane Playing Field so any facilities for the youth would have to be provided there. There were advantages and disadvantages to making a youth provision on the field. It had to be remembered however that the field had been used by the village for recreational purposes for the last 50 years. People living near to the

field had been aware of the purpose of the field when they had moved into their houses.

In view of the Council's limited resources at the present time it was suggested that it look at a low cost experiment involving erecting the old bus shelter that had previously been in Church Road and was now in storage, on the field to be used as a youth shelter, initially for a limited period of time. Hardstanding would have to be put down prior to the shelter being erected and adequate lighting would need to be supplied. However, before work for this project could be put in hand it was necessary to discuss the idea with young people in the village. If they didn't like the proposal it would not go ahead.

PC Cooper agreed to draw up a list of names and addresses of young people who were interested in meeting with representatives of the Parish Council to discuss the proposed pilot scheme.

Other issues discussed at the meeting included residents parking on grassed verges in the village and PC Cooper agreed to post warnings on windscreens. Police response times and the poor standards of the Constabulary's telephone system were considered. The situation as a result of the County Council's Transport Co-ordination Department inability to recruit a school crossing patrol assistant to cross children over Church Road was also raised. It was suggested that if the Constabulary supported that Parish Council in its quest to get a pedestrian crossing and/or flashing lights installed outside the Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School, the proposed road safety scheme might get approval.

Councillor RA Storrar reported that Chester City Council's Local Panel 7 had some funding left from its 2000/2001 budget for community projects. A proposal which had been mooted was to use the funding to provide a Homewatch Co-ordinator for a 12 month period for the whole of the rural area. It was noted that there would be revenue implications.

The benefit of such a proposal to Saughall was limited as the village already had a very competent Homewatch Co-ordinator of its own. It was felt that the Parish Council should resist this view as the residue funding could be used for something more worthwhile and applicable to the village. It was agreed that representatives of the Parish Council would attend the next meeting of the Local Panel 7 scheduled for the following evening, when this issue would be discussed to make the Council's position clear.