

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH
COUNCIL held on 7 April 2003 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs M Anderson
Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
Councillor Mrs J Johnson
Councillor B Kerr
Councillor C Moss
Councillor R Shukla
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor Mrs D Whitton
Councillor C Wynne-Eyton
Councillor Mrs J Young

Mr B Jones – Acting Homewatch Co-ordinator
County Councillor D Rowlands

68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Councillor A Marsden

69 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Kerr declared an Interest in item No 12 – The Parish Plan. He was the Chairman of the Cheshire Community Council and it had been commissioned to carry out survey work, etc.

70 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 3 March 2003 be confirmed as a correct record.

71 OVERGROWN HEDGE

Concern was raised over an overgrown hedge between the Red House and the Peg on Hermitage Road. Councillor RA Storrar agreed to get it cut back.

72 ACCOUNTS

(a) Payments made since the meeting of the Council held on 3 March 2003:

Financial Year 2002/2003	£	Cheque No
Macemain & Amstad (Bench seats)	1,281.81	101584
Mr R Easby	372.75	101585
STRI Ltd	101.29	101586

Financial Year 2002/2003	£	Cheque No
All Saints Parochial Church Council (Burial Grant from Chester City Council)	400.00	101587
Saughall Methodist Church (Burial Grant from Chester City Council)	400.00	101588
Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council (Street Cleaning)	2,283.45	101590
Cheshire County Council (Contribution to bus shelter scheme) (It was agreed to not release the cheque until the work was complete and the two shelters illuminated)	2,500.00	101591
Inland Revenue	576.03	101593
Mrs S Hudspeth (Expenses)	73.32	101594
Financial Year 2003/2004	£	Cheque No
Mr C Moss (Parish Room Rent)	312.50	101589
Mrs S Hudspeth (Salary)	544.60	101592
Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils (Annual subscription & copies of Local Council Review)	600.80	101595
Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils (Clerk's copy of Local Council Review)	10.59	101596

(b) Receipts

Interest to 22 March 2003 (14 day Interest Account)	27.24
Interest to 23 February 2003 (Treasurer Account)	0.08
Interest to 23 March 2003 (Treasurer Account)	0.07
Burial Grant from Chester City Council	800.00
Grant from Countryside Agency to compile a Parish Plan (half)	2,500.00
Chester City Council – Local Panel Grant for Golden Jubilee Park development	3,200.00
Chester City Council – Community Safety Grant	628.74
Precept	32,593.00

(c) Non Domestic Rate Bill

There would be 9 monthly payments of £107.00 and 1 of £102.60.

It was agreed that the Valuation Officer would be asked for advice on the possibility of a commercial rates review.

(d) Anonymous Donation

Mr Peter Bond of Sea Hill Road had reported that he had been approached by a donor, who wished to remain anonymous, and who wished to give the Parish Council £500 as an expression of appreciation in respect of the Council's stand over the Deeside Industrial Park proposals.

The Chairman would report further on this matter in due course.

51 POLICE/HOMEWATCH

(a) Police

No report had been received from PC Gareth Cooper.

(b) Homewatch

Mr Bryan Jones, Acting Homewatch Co-ordinator, reported that the village was quiet at the moment. The Annual Meeting of the Homewatch was scheduled for 13 May 2003.

PC Baker had asked for a meeting with Mr Jones. However, Mr Dave Owen had not yet replied to e-mails sent by Mr Jones.

Mr Jones had written to Inspector Geoffrey Williams on 7 March 2003 regarding anti-social behaviour in Meadows Lane and the attitude of the police. Unfortunately, Inspector Williams had not responded.

Under the circumstances, Mr Jones had concerns over the relationship between the Police and the Homewatch and informed that police support was essential if the Homewatch was to continue.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(c) Nuisance Youth Activity

Councillor Kerr reported on graffiti left on the road, garages and electrical sub-station in Greenway, behind Wain House, at Hermitage Court and at the bus station in Chester. This had been reported to the City Desk and the police agreed to take action, the culprit was known as he had left his name!

The police had been called to enforce the No Ball Games byelaw and had arrived within ten minutes. It was agreed that the only way to get action was to contact the City Desk (Tel No 01244 350222).

The Chairman reported on communications he had sent and received from the police. There had been a number of e-mails and telephone conversations. Although the Chairman had written to the Chief Constable regarding Project Rural Matters his letter had been passed to Chief Inspector Dave Hill to respond. Unfortunately, the response received had not been appropriate and had not addressed the issues raised.

It was noted that children continued to play ball games, etc. in Meadows Lane. A number of residents had concerns and had written to the Clerk to express them. It was important that all incidents were reported to the police and that an incident number was obtained.

It was reported that a car had demolished a lamp post in Greenway and 3 police vehicles had attended.

Anti-social behaviour was currently at the top of the political agenda. It was suggested that it may be possible to mount a campaign to attract Home Office grants to be used to employ Neighbourhood Wardens. As a first step the Clerk would write to the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils informing of this Council's concerns about law and order and anti-social behaviour and asking for advice to get a campaign going to secure grant from the Home Office to establish a Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme.

County Councillor Dave Rowlands informed that he had attended a very useful meeting, The Rural Forum's – Community Safety Seminar on 1 April 2003 where there had been three presentations on community safety issues, one from the Deputy Chief Constable. It seemed that the problems being experienced in the rural area were worse than the Deputy thought and County Councillor Rowlands agreed to write to him and bring the relevant information to his attention.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

74 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the following Committees and Panels be received:

Planning Committee held on 3 March 2003
Meeting with Chester City Council Planners held on 19 March 2003
Golden Jubilee Park Panel held on 27 March 2003

It was reported that on advice received from Planning Officers, the Chairman had commissioned Dr Brian Hodgeson to carry out two studies, one on the ditch and one on the three pools (one of which was in the Council's ownership) and provide an ecologist report on whether or not the area was a habitat for Greater Crested Newts. The survey would cost £500 and the report would be produced by the end of the month.

The Clerk had written to the Environment Agency regarding the proposal to culvert the ditch but no response had been received as yet.

It was noted that a request had been received for tennis court markings to be put on the car park along with other court markings previously suggested.

Councillor Kerr reported that a meeting was arranged with Mr Ray Easby to agree the final tender specifications. Once this was done he would work with the Clerk to put together the relevant letters inviting firms to re-tender for the Golden Jubilee Park development work.

75 CHESTER CITY COUNCIL

The Chairman reported on proceedings of an informal meeting between the Finance and General Purposes Committee and, in the absence of Mr Paul Durham, Chief Executive, Ms Anne Lancaster, Chester City Council's Lead Officer – Area

Committees, held on 11 March 2003 to sort out the problems and improve relationships.

Of particular concern was the proposal to build affordable housing on land in the ownership of the County Council. Members noted the content of an e-mail from the County Property Manager, Mr Ian Gould, that stated that he had no authority to sell the land for anything less than full market value. However, City Council officers seemed to think that negotiations were ongoing and that the project was viable. County Councillor Rowlands undertook to obtain a full briefing from Ian Gould and report back to the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

76 HIGHWAYS MATTERS

(a) District Engineer's Actions

The District Engineer, Mr Graham Anderton, had informed the Clerk that he had notified United Utilities of the missing stop tap cover on the footpath on Church Road beside "The Cottage". He had also ensured that the worst of the fallen branches obstructing Coal Pit Lane had been removed.

It was noted that the large mass of concrete and wire previously moved to the back of the verge at the Peg by the District Engineer, had been moved forward again.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be received; and

(2) the District Engineer be asked to remove the mass of concrete.

(b) Lock-up Garages – Saughall Hey

Councillor Kerr reported that the surface by the lock-up garages at the beginning of Saughall Hey needed attention before someone tripped.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to write to the Housing Trust pointing out the problem and suggesting that appropriate repairs are carried out as soon as possible.

(c) Lodge Lane/Church Road Junction

There were no white lines at the junction. The Clerk had asked the District Engineer to ensure that this matter was addressed and the District Engineer had undertaken to do so.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

(d) Cheshire Railings

It was reported that some old broken Cheshire Railings had been removed near to the roundabout at the A5117/A540 junction and replaced with ranch fencing. It was considered that there was no obligation to replace like with like. The Clerk agreed to check this with the District Engineer who had informed that Adkins was response.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(e) Proposal to reduce the speed of passing traffic at the Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School

Miss Kay Hallas, Senior Technician, Traffic and Transportation, had informed that the traffic counts being carried out in the village were part of the assessment of the environmental traffic calming sites. Once these had been completed she would let the Clerk have details of the results.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(f) Traffic Congestion at the Ridings Community Infants School

PC Gareth Cooper had agreed to give this problem passing attention. Also, following a request from the Clerk, Mrs Judith Davies, Headteacher, had written to parents asking for their help to relieve the congestion.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(g) Roadworks on A540, Parkgate Road

Mr Mike Hopwood, Engineering Services, Backford Hall, had written to the Clerk regarding extensive work to the carriageway of the A540 from the A5117 roundabout, heading north towards Woodbank, provisionally programmed for October 2003. The road width narrowed to 6.3m in parts and as such, some element and/or lane closure would be needed to complete the work safely and with minimal delay. Various options were being considered.

With the aim of reaching the best, quickest and safest solution, representatives of the Council were invited to attend a traffic management meeting to be held at Backford Hall at 10:00am on 1 May 2003. (Later moved to 2:00pm on Wednesday, 7 May 2003)

RESOLVED:

That Councillors C Moss and Mrs J Young be requested to represent the Council at this meeting.

(a) Play Area Inspection - Fiddlers Lane Playing Field

It was noted that Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council had informed that the play equipment remained in good order.

The goalposts had been recovered from the ditch and needed to be repositioned at the top end of the field.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to ask Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council to reposition the goalposts.

(b) Parish Paths Warden's Report

The Parish Paths Warden, Mr Leach, had spoken to Cheshire County Council's Rights of Way Section and had been informed that work would be carried out to bring about the improvements needed on the public footpaths and rights of way.

It was reported that youths were using the permissive footpaths as a racetrack and had damaged the new gates to make a sort of bridge to get their motorbikes into the woods. The Clerk and Councillor A Warrington had reported this to the Warden, Mr Alan Oulton.

The Chairman suggested that a Saughall "Walking Day" be arranged starting and finishing at the Greyhound. This could be a family day involving young and old alike. Various activities could also be organised including a treasure hunt and a picnic.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the reports be received; and

(2) the Chairman be requested to take the "Walking Day" initiative forward.

(c) Grassed Amenity Areas – Greenway and Saughall Hey

It was noted that the City Council had already cut the grass three times this year despite the agreement to let it grow longer to deter ball games.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to bring this problem to the attention of Chester City Council's Area Committees Manager, Ms Anne Lancaster, so that she can ensure the contractors are reminded not to cut the grass so often.

(d) Best Kept Village/Civic Pride Competition

RESOLVED:

That Oaktree Nurseries be requested to supply four baskets to hang around the Parish Room and maintain them through the Spring/Summer months.

(e) Bus Shelter Lighting

RESOLVED:

That the position regarding the unlit bus shelters be monitored and once lit the Clerk be requested to release the cheque and pay Cheshire County Council.

(f) National Grid – Daines to Deeside Overhead Line Refurbishment

RESOLVED:

That the letter from the National Grid's Wayleave Officer informing of forthcoming works to be undertaken be noted.

(g) Vernon Institute Clock

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mrs Humphrey be requested to put the Clerk in touch with an electrician who is able to carry out the illumination work to the specifications provided by JB Joyce, the clock manufacturer.

(h) Disruptions to Power Supply

The Clerk has written to SP Power Systems to ascertain why there had been a disruption to the power supply on 9 March 2003. The cause of the fault had been traced to a tree branch on the overhead line. A permanent repair had been made to eliminate the fault.

RESOLVED:

That reason for the interruption to the power supply be noted.

(i) Land to the North of Lodge Lane, Saughall – Affordable Housing

The County Property Manager, Mr Ian Gould, had informed that the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott's recent decision over funding arrangements meant that Arena needed to make a grant application. However, there was a ceiling value of about £64,000 that they could place on their properties. They were concerned that they may not be able to enforce this when a purchaser sold the property on, and could achieve a windfall gain in current terms of about £85,000.

Mr Gould also restated his position that he had no authority at present to sell the land in question and would only seek such authority from his members if he

received a proposal that met Cheshire County Council's and the Parish Council's joint requirements in terms of price and community benefit.

RESOLVED:

That the position be noted.

(j) Passageway – Fieldway

It was reported that no consultations had been carried out by the Housing Trust despite its promise and that a meeting it had arranged with residents had been subsequently cancelled.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to write to the Housing Trust's Manager, Mr Geoff Blackburn, asking for a progress report on what he is doing regarding the passageway.

78 PARISH PLAN

It was reported that the Council's bid for a £5,000 grant from the Countryside Agency to compile a Parish Plan had been successful. The Council was now working to set timescales to publish the Plan within twelve months.

RESOLVED:

That a meeting of the Parish Plan Steering Group be called for 7:30pm on Wednesday, 23 April 2003 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall.

79 PARISH COUNCIL SURGERIES

RESOLVED:

That the Parish Council's Surgeries rota for the next six weeks be as follows:

Date	Member
12 April 2003	Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
19 April 2003	Councillor B Kerr
26 April 2003	Councillor C Moss
3 May 2003	Councillor RA Storrar
10 May 2003	Councillor A Bailey
17 May 2003	Councillor B Kerr

80 COMMUNITY PHARMACIES

The Council noted the content of a report by an All-Party Pharmacy Group at the House of Commons, forwarded by Christine Russell MP. It had also been reported

recently in the press that the Government had made a 'U-turn' and that supermarkets would no longer pose a threat to community pharmacies. However, this was disputed.

RESOLVED:

That as the community pharmacy issue is still alive, the outcome be awaited.

81 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to obtain a copy of the NALC Model Standing Orders and bring a report, in consultation with the Chairman, on any suggested amendments in due course.

82 THE 'QUALITY' TOWN AND PARISH INITIATIVE

The Council noted the content of a letter sent to the Clerk by DEFRA which announced the details of the 'QUALITY' Parish initiative, developed by Government following consultation. The scheme had been developed jointly by DEFRA and ODPM with the collaboration of key stakeholders such as the Local Government Association, the National Association of Local Councils and the Countryside Agency.

The scheme set out some straightforward tests that parish and town councils had to pass before they were awarded 'QUALITY' Parish Council Status. The list for accreditation required a 'QUALITY' Council to:

- ?? have initially at least 80% of its seats filled by candidates who stood for election (rising to 100% for re-accreditation)
- ?? have a suitably qualified Clerk
- ?? hold at least 6 Council meetings each year
- ?? publish annual reports
- ?? provide regular information to residents on parish activities
- ?? produce properly prepared and audited accounts.

Applications would be assessed by County Panels who would be made up of people with experience of both principal authorities and town and parish councils.

The scheme also included a model charter where all parish councils were encouraged to negotiate with principal authorities to set out how these tiers of local government could promote partnership working. Once granted 'QUALITY' status, it was hoped that local councils would be in a position to give their communities a better deal on local services and a stronger voice on decisions affecting people's day to day lives.

The Council went on to consider the potential conflict over the heightened role of 'QUALITY' parish councils and Chester City Council's Area Committees.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the letter from DEFRA in the light of the Chester City Council's Area Committee initiative be noted.

83 MEMBER ATTENDANCE AT OUTSIDE EVENTS

The Council received reports on proceedings at the following events recently attended by its representatives:

Quality Parish Council Status – National Seminar – Tuesday, 18 March 2003 (Councillor Kerr) (Minute No 82/2003 refers)

Chester's Area Committees – Monday, 31 March 2003 – Town Hall, Chester (Councillor Mrs JE Storrar)

There was a budget allocation of £28,230 in respect of the Gowy North Area Committee and the criteria for spending was discussed in detail along with what it could be spent on. It was important for the Council to get its funding bids in as soon as possible.

The first meeting of the Gowy North Area Committee would be held at 7:00pm on Wednesday, 16 April 2003 at Barrow Village Hall. It was agreed that Councillors Mrs JE Storrar, A Warrington and the Chairman would attend.

Cheshire Rural Forum – Community Safety Seminar – 1 April 2003 – Winsford Civic Centre (County Councillor Rowlands) (Minute No 73(c)/2003 refers)

84 CHESHIRE RURAL FORUM ANNUAL CONFERENCE – TATTON PARK, WEDNESDAY, 4 JUNE 2003 – 9:30AM-12:30PM

RESOLVED:

That Councillors Mrs J Young and C Moss be requested to attend and bring a report on proceedings to the June Meeting of the Council.

85 CIRCULARS RECEIVED

The following circulars had been received anyone who wanted a copy would contact the Clerk:

Chester City Council's The Past Year 2001/02

Chester City Council's Ethics and Standards Committee agenda for meeting held on 28 March 2003

Chester City Council's Council Meeting held on 26 March 2003

Cheshire County Council – Chester Matters March 2003

86 VERNON INSTITUTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Vernon Institute Management Committee meetings held on 14 January, 11 February and 11 March 2003 be received.

87 NEXT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Members considered the date of the next meeting of the Council and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman gave notice that if it was held as scheduled on Monday, 12 May 2003 neither would be able to attend.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Council be postponed until Tuesday, 20 May 2003.