

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE  
held on 25 July 2003 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)  
Councillor A Marsden  
Councillor C Moss  
Councillor A Warrington  
Councillor C Wynne-Eyton.

Invitee: Mr D Bird

7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Councillor RA Storrar  
Councillor Mrs J Young

8 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

9 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That subject to the word “he” in Minute No 4(f) Golden Jubilee Park being replaced with “the Council” the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 June 2003 be confirmed as a correct record.

10 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

(a) Play Area Inspection – Fiddlers Lane Playing Field

It was noted that the play equipment, fencing, access and seating were all in good order and that one of the litter bins was loose and not firmly fixed to the ground.

Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council had reported that there was a lot of broken glass on the field and that they could not guarantee to remove it all. Councillor C Moss reported that he had picked up as much of the glass as he could. He had also spoken to PC Gareth Cooper who had agreed to ask his colleagues to patrol in the evening when the youths congregated and broke bottles. It was also reported that a police sergeant had informed residents that it was the Parish Council’s responsibility to lock up the field each evening.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(b) Tree Warden's Report

The Tree Warden reported that the Council's grant application in respect of a £600 tree planting scheme had been submitted on time. A decision would be made by September 2003. A condition of the funding was that children were involved in the tree planting.

Chester City Council's Trees and Woodlands Officer, Mr P Murray, had written to the Clerk over his concerns at the condition of an Ash Tree in the Golden Jubilee Park. It was a hazard to highway users and as it was in a poor state removal was the most realistic option. The Tree Warden reported that in fact there were three trees on the Council's land in poor condition and dangerous and he was in the process of obtaining quotes for their removal. Removal would necessitate the telephone line to the Uniformed Groups Headquarters being temporarily dropped.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Tree Warden be thanked for making the funding bid;
- (2) Councillors Mrs P Humphreys and Mrs J Young (as School Governors) be requested to discuss the possibility of some children being involved in the tree planting project once it was known whether the funding bid has been successful;
- (3) on receipt of an acceptable quotation the trees in question be removed as soon as possible; and
- (4) Councillor Mrs J Young be consulted over the telephone line.

(c) Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 – Section 60 Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

The Assistant Countryside Access Officer, Ms Sally Bielby, had written to the Clerk regarding consultation over improvements to the rights of way network in Cheshire as part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Members received an explanatory note outlining the purpose and scope of the ROWIP.

The Chairman was in discussion with the Parish Paths Warden and between them they were looking to identify improvements that could be carried out on the village's public footpaths and rights of way. A response to the Consultation would be provided in September 2003.

(d) Parish Paths Warden's Report

The Chairman reported that he and Mr Tony Leach, the Parish Paths Warden, were considering how areas of the village could be opened up to ramblers. Two schemes were currently being considered including access to the Golden Jubilee Park. Grants were available for footpath improvements.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received; and

(2) a further report be provided for the Committee once the detail of the proposed public footpath schemes had been firmed up.

(e) Vernon Institute Clock

It was noted that the Vernon Institute Clock was not lit at all now. Members wondered if this was because the new lighting scheme was being introduced and work was in progress.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairman try to establish the current situation regarding the proposed new lighting scheme for the Clock.

(f) Passageway – Fieldway

Councillor C Moss reported that he had been in touch with the Chester Housing Trust who had informed that the residents of Fieldway had been consulted over the closure of the passageway. Twelve responses had been received. Eleven occupiers wanted the passageway closed whilst only one was in favour of it remaining open. The Trust had also informed that when funding became available a decision would be made on whether or not to close the passageway.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to follow Councillor Moss' enquiry up with a letter asking when the consultation process will end and when the decision on whether or not to close the passageway will be made.

(g) Golden Jubilee Park

Mr D Bird attended the meeting at the request of the Chairman to provide a progress report on the tendering process following discussions he had held with Mr Ray Easby, the Council's technical advisor. Mr Bird reported that the appropriate paperwork would be sent to the five tenderers tomorrow. One map would still be missing from the information provided as no one knew where it was. Mr Easby would have to draw it up again. The tendering period had been extended to 1 September 2003 because of discrepancies in the paperwork supplied.

RESOLVED:

That Mr Bird be thanked for his attendance and for his intervention to get the tendering process back on track.

(h) Grassed Amenity Areas

Mr Phil Davies of Chester City Council had not replied to the Clerk's e-mail concerning the long running problems of the grass cutting and prone bollard.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to ask Anne Lancaster to intervene to secure a reply.

(i) Community Pride Competition 2003

The Annual Awards Ceremony would be held at 7:00pm on 2 October 2003 at Northwich Memorial Hall.

RESOLVED:

That Councillors Mrs J Young and A Warrington be requested to attend to represent the Council.

11 HIGHWAY ISSUES

(a) Mass of Concrete on Verge – Hermitage Road

The District Engineer had informed the Clerk that he would arrange the removal of the concrete that had now been split into two.

(b) Lodge Lane/Church Road Junction

It was noted that the white lines had now been painted on the road at the junction.

RESOLVED:

That the District Engineer be thanked for his prompt action.

(c) Overgrown Hedges

The Committee considered the village's hedges and noted that the hedging on Hermitage Road became overgrown every year and obstructed the pathway and in some cases visibility. Councillor Marsden reported that the Environment Agency was very strict about when hedges could be trimmed and anyone cutting them back when the birds were nesting would receive a heavy fine. This meant that farmers were unable to cut their hedges in their quieter period and then were too busy to do so later in the year resulting in them becoming very overgrown.

Members considered what the Council could do to remedy this repeated problem once and for all.

RESOLVED: That

(1) Councillor A Marsden be requested to get two quotes for hedge cutting on both sides of Hermitage Road, twice a year; and

(2) hedge cutting be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

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

The Clerk had asked Miss Kay Hallas of Cheshire County Council's Traffic and Transportation Section to arrange traffic counts before and after the traffic signal scheme was installed at the junction of Sea Hill Road and Sealand Road.

The Chairman reported that one of the presenters on Chester's radio station had mentioned on more than one occasion that now that there were traffic lights at the end of Sea Hill Road, Green Lane and Sealand Road he would use Saughall as a short cut.

Miss Hallas informed that fortunately she had the recent traffic counts from the environmental traffic calming assessment of Church Road and Hermitage Road but didn't have any for Sea Hill Road. She would check with Flintshire to see if it had any as a result of any assessments carried out before it put the traffic signals in.

Any impact the new signals had on flows through the village would be more accurately measured after the signals had been operational for a few months. Miss Hallas would arrange further counts to be carried out in approximately 4 months time as by then most people who were going to use the village as a short cut would be doing so. She would carry out after counts on Hermitage Road as well as assess any increase in traffic from the Blacon side using Sea Hill Road as an alternative to Western Avenue.

Miss Hallas later reported that as the works on the A550 were underway, and although not effecting flow on the main carriageway, could do so at any time. She had carried out traffic counts in the village prior to the schools breaking up for the Summer. She considered that leaving the after counts until after the Summer may result in flows being affected by an increase in traffic through the village due to drivers avoiding the A550. Unfortunately, Miss Hallas did not think that the counts would take into account the full impact of the signals as previously mentioned but if they hadn't been done we may not have had another opportunity until the roadworks on the A550 were completed (programmed to be about 5 years).

Miss Hallas would send the traffic counts to the Clerk. However, she had looked at them and they showed very little change certainly none which could be attributed to the signals.

The Chairman reported that a wish list had been drawn up following consultation with villagers at the Church Fete, of improvements they would like to see in the village in the next few years. Twenty people had identified traffic calming as being necessary in the village. The Council would explore and debate traffic calming measures at its meeting in September 2003.

Perhaps the only option to solve the problem with speeding traffic at the school was the introductions of a traffic calming measure e.g. chicanes.

**RESOLVED:** That

(1) the report be received; and

(2) the traffic counts be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

(e) Traffic Congestion at the Ridings Community Infant School

The Clerk had requested Sergeant Ian Ankers to ticket those motorists who caused obstructions in the environs of the Ridings Community Infant School as a last resort because all the strategies the Council had tried had failed.

Sergeant Ankers had reported back that he had asked the Traffic Wardens, when they came out to Saughall, to pay some attention to the problem.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the situation continue to be monitored in September after the school holidays.

(f) Bus Shelters

The Clerk had reminded Mr Brian Ebbrell about her request for quotes to repair the Council's three wooden bus shelters. Again he had not responded. The only conclusion to be drawn was that he was not interested in carrying out the work needed.

The Chairman reported that the litter bin on Meadows Lane had been burnt.

The bottom sections of the new bus shelters had been replaced with plastic. The lights in the shelter were on all night and as a consequence youths gathered there well into the early hours.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Councillor A Warrington be requested to obtain quotes in respect of bus shelter repairs;
- (2) the Clerk be requested to obtain a quotation to replace the burnt out litter bin in Meadows Lane; and
- (3) the Clerk be requested to ask Ms Christine Garner of Cheshire County Council if the bus shelter lights can be connected to a timer.

(h) Cheshire railings on A540/A5117 Junction

The District Engineer was unable to offer a solution. Atkins acted for the Highways Agency who were the Highway Authority for the road. He suggested that the Clerk contact the Highway Agency to see if they could issue instructions to replace the ranch fencing with Cheshire fencing.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to seek advise from the Highway Agency.