

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE
held on 27 November 2003 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)
Councillor A Marsden
Councillor C Moss
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor C Wynne-Eyton (Tree Warden)

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Mrs J Young

19 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

20 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 July 2003 and the informal meeting held on 18 September 2003 be confirmed as a correct record.

21 ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

(a) Fiddlers Lane Playing Field/Golden Jubilee Park Development

Play Equipment Inspection Report

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.

The Clerk would ascertain from Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council when the hedges around the field would be trimmed.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

(b) Parish Paths Warden's Report

It was reported that Mr Leach had not been able to walk the footpaths for approximately five weeks.

The Clerk had written to Mr Alan Oulton, Cheshire County Council's Countryside Officer, requesting he mend the broken bridge over the brook opposite Overwood

House. He had responded asking whether the bridge was on a public footpath that he maintained or on the permissive route in the care of the County Property Management Service.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to respond to Mr Oulton informing him that the bridge is on a public footpath and that his Service has maintained it in the past.

(c) Vernon Institute Clock

No progress had been made in commissioning an electrician to carry out illumination work on the Clock as advised by the clockmakers JB Joyce of Whitchurch. Another attempt would be made but, in the meantime, the plan passed to Mr Murphy would need to be retrieved.

RESOLVED:

That the position be noted and a further report be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

(d) Passageway – Fieldway

No progress had been made in getting the Chester District Housing Trust to agree to close the passageway in Fieldway on community safety grounds. The Clerk had written to Chester City Councillor Bob Rudd, a Member of the Trust, for help. Subsequently, he had passed the correspondence on to the Trust's Director of Operations on 17 November 2003 informing the Clerk that he would respond to her. Unfortunately, he had not!

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to write to the Chester and District Housing Trust's Director of Operations to request that the passageway be closed.

(g) Golden Jubilee Park

(i) Concerns

Members received a letter sent to the Clerk by two residents of Long Lane. The letter had been written to express concerns over the development. The writers informed that they found it surprising that there had not been any local open consultation/discussion and that only residents in the immediate vicinity of the existing play area were informed of the plans.

The main concerns outlined in the letter were as follows:

?? Ecological issues in particular the removal of the hedgerow and piping of the ditch bordering a green belt field. Disturbance of natural habitat.

- ?? Proposed car park between the existing play area and hut – access, safety and traffic issues at this congested spot. Potential nuisance from noise at weekends and evenings.
- ?? Relaxation of the green belt – how long before extra building goes up – changing rooms/stadiums & floodlights?
- ?? Intensity of use. How will the area be maintained and financed? Will it be hired out to raise income? Increased traffic, noise etc. in the evenings and at weekends.
- ?? Long term management and “policing” of the area. How can vandalism, nuisance from youths and annoyance be minimised?

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to reply to the concerned residents informing them of the following:

- ?? Chester City Council as the Planning Authority consults the neighbours.
- ?? There is a public forum at every Council meeting.
- ?? Information about the development has been included in each of the last three Parish Newsletters.
- ?? An ecological expert was commissioned by the Parish Council to produce a report. The report was submitted with the planning application and should be available for inspection at the Town Hall in Chester.
- ?? No final decision has been made on the car park layout, it is still under discussion.
- ?? The development will be financed through grants.
- ?? There will be no relaxation of the green belt.
- ?? There will be no changing rooms/stadium or floodlights.
- ?? The sports facilities will be used by local people.
- ?? The facilities will be policed by Saughall Colts and Saughall Cricket Club. Discussions are being held on how the Homewatch can help. There will be liaison with the police and the Council is considering appointing a Parish Officer.
- ?? The Saughall Colts and Saughall Cricket Club will maintain it.
- ?? You do live next to a play area!
- ?? The Council is alive to your concerns however the development will benefit the whole of Saughall.

(ii) Trees

The Tree Warden reported that most of the 231 trees he had secured through grant aid had been planted. Mr Pollard had assisted and would be sending the

Clerk his invoice. Children from the local schools accompanied by their teachers and parents had also helped. Photographs had been taken.

The Committee considered the future of the oak tree that needed to be removed to accommodate the sports pitches. There was no Tree Preservation Order on the tree.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the Tree Warden be thanked for all of his hard work in respect of the tree planting scheme; and

(2) Council be **RECOMMENDED** to authorise the early removal of the oak tree.

(f) Grassed Amenity Areas - Bollards

RESOLVED:

That this item be removed from future Committee agenda.

(g) Litter Bins

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Moss be requested to check the litter bins in the Fiddlers Lane Playing Field.

22 HIGHWAY ISSUES

(a) Use of Mobile Speed Warning Signs in Saughall

Ms Anne Lancaster, Chester City Council's Area Committee Officer, had written to the Clerk to let her know that Saughall was next on the list for the UNIPAR speed warning sign. The equipment would be available from the afternoon of Thursday, 4 December 2003. The lease period was for 7 days.

The equipment came with a full leasing agreement, explanation of terms of same and a map of the agreed sites (which were the only sites that could be used during the leasing period). Full assembly instructions would be provided in the leasing pack. The equipment could only be used by Parish Councillors who were carrying out the duties of the Parish Council as the organisation leasing the equipment. Two high visibility jackets would be provided and must be used when siting, monitoring and dismantling equipment. The equipment must be securely fixed to a permanent structure if at all possible. The equipment must not be used before 7 am or after 11pm and must not be left on site when not in use. Two people must be 'on duty' at all times with the equipment and the equipment must be kept in sight at all times. This was for both personal safety reasons and because the equipment was eminently 'nickable'. Other parish councils had found it useful to set up a rota of volunteers.

The sites agreed were:

Church Road - near Thomas Wedge School attached to lamp post by bus shelter

Hermitage Road - left side of road leading from Blacon to Saughall - opposite house No 200 next to telegraph pole in bus stop area.

Given that the conditions above were met Members could site and use the equipment as many times as they wished/was possible given that the equipment will need to be charged up during the leasing period.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the terms of the lease be noted; and

(2) the Council be **RECOMMENDED** to draw up a schedule for the equipment's use at its next meeting on Monday, 1 December 2003.

(b) Mass of Concrete on Verge - Hermitage Road

RESOLVED:

That this issue be removed from future Committee agenda.

(c) Overgrown Hedge

The Committee noted that it would cost approximately £150 each time the hedges adjacent to the footpath on Hermitage Road were cut. Maintenance of the hedges was the responsibility of those who farmed the land they were on. Cheshire County Council, as the Highway Authority, had responsibilities to ensure footpaths were not obstructed.

RESOLVED:

That arrangements be made for the Chairman and Mr Graham Anderton, the District Engineer, to meet and agree an appropriate way forward in the interest of villagers personal safety.

(d) Proposal to Reduce the Speed of Passing Traffic at the Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School

It was noted that parked cars outside the school helped to slow down the traffic flow. Recent traffic counts illustrated that speeding on Church Road was not a problem.

RESOLVED: That

(1) Members be requested to continue to monitor the speed of traffic on Church Road; and

(2) the item be removed from future Committee agendas.

(e) Traffic Congestion at the Ridings Community Infant School

It was reported that there was still a traffic congestion problem at the school. The Headteacher had done all she could to encourage parents to walk their children to school but without much success.

RESOLVED: That

(1) Members be requested to continue to monitor the congestion problems at the school; and

(2) the item be removed from future Committee agendas.

(f) Bus Shelters Replacement and Repairs

Ms Christine Garner of Cheshire County Council's Transport Co-ordination Section had written to inform on progress on the 2 bus shelter schemes. Initial surveys of both of the proposed bus shelter sites on Hermitage Road showed that one site (opposite the Egerton Arms) "could be" on private land, depending on precise location/type of shelter. She would therefore be writing to the landowners in order to obtain the necessary permissions at the earliest opportunity. Until they were obtained she was not able to give any assurances about delivery (although she did not anticipate there being any problems).

Assuming permissions were received, the shelters remained programmed for installation in January 2004. Ms Garner would keep the Clerk informed of progress.

The Chairman reported that he had spoken to Mr Brian Ebbrell who had agreed to carry out repairs next week on three of the Council owned bus shelters.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the reports be noted; and

(2) the Clerk be requested to contact Ms Garner to find out if the siting of the new bus shelters was still on target for January 2004.

(g) Pathway - Hermitage Road – from Ridings to Vernon Institute

It was reported that the resurfacing work had now been carried out and the footpath was of an appropriate standard.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(h) Cheshire Railings on A540/A5117 Junction

The Clerk had written to the Highways Agency to complain that it had replaced the Cheshire railings on the roundabout with ranch fencing.

Consequently, Ms Elizabeth Girvan, Route Manager, Area 10, had responded explaining that Cheshire Fencing was originally installed at the junction as an aid to visibility. Since the sight lines were improved some years ago, this requirement no longer existed. In addition, it was considered that the provision of ranch fencing which was quicker and more cost effective to repair, would be beneficial at this site which bordered a field normally stocked with livestock and had a history of being damaged.

Nonetheless, Ms Girvan agreed that the heritage aspects had not been fully taken into consideration when the fence was replaced, and she therefore had arranged for Cheshire railings to be re-instated as soon as possible.

The Committee then turned its attention to the other Cheshire railings within the parish, some of which was in need of maintenance.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) Members be requested to make an inventory of all the Cheshire railing in Saughall and provide the Chairman with the information at the next meeting of the Council on 1 December 2003; and
- (3) the Chairman be requested to discuss the railing's maintenance with the District Engineer at their forthcoming meeting.

(i) Bollards on the Verge on Long Lane to Prevent Car Parking

The Clerk had requested advice from the District Engineer on the installation of bollards to stop cars parking on the verge and the Spring bulbs being damaged.

Mr Anderton had responded informing that as a general rule, whenever a resident requested this type of thing, he supplied white plastic posts at a charge of approximately £7 each. On top of this, whoever did the work had to be insured for working on the public highway. Health and Safety Executive requirements meant that all excavations within the public highway also needed information on the location of services, so this usually precluded private individuals carrying out the work themselves. Mr Anderton suggested that he attend a site meeting with representatives of the Parish Council to discuss the issue involved.

RESOLVED:

That a site meeting be arranged to consider this proposal and any alternatives.

(j) Fiddlers Lane Playing Field – Information Signs

It was reported that the children playing information signs had been replaced.

RESOLVED:

That Miss Kay Hallas of Cheshire County Council be thanked for her prompt action.