

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on 17 July 2003 in the Parish Room, Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)  
Councillor C Wynne-Eyton  
Councillor Mrs M Wynne-Eyton  
Councillor R Shukla.  
Councillor RA Storrar  
Councillor A Warrington

Invited Member: Councillor Mrs JE Storrar

Invited Guests: Mrs A Amesbury, Chester City Council  
Mr T Clay, Director of Regeneration, Arena  
Mr H Dobson, Internal Auditor  
Ms C Ellis, Assistant Director of Regeneration, Arena  
Mr IW Gould, County Property Officer

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from County Councillor D Rowlands.

38 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

39 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 April 2003 be confirmed as a correct record.

40 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute No 36 – Newsletter

It was noted that the Broadband campaign had been very successful and that the required 400 registrations had been achieved by 8 July 2003.

41 PROPOSED AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN SAUGHALL

The Chairman informed the meeting that the Council hoped to determine a way forward in respect of the proposed affordable housing. No progress had been made and it was important to clarify once and for all the position regarding the land on Lodge Lane, currently in the ownership of the County Council.

The County Property Officer reported that the land where it was proposed 12 affordable housing units could be built was operational land, part of the County Farms Estate and had not been declared surplus to the County Council's requirements. Therefore, he could only recommend to the County Farms Panel that it be sold at its full market value.

Mr Clay informed that although Arena had lost one funding stream as a result of a decision by the Deputy Prime Minister it was in a position to substitute the grant aid lost with Recycle Capital Grant funding. There was obviously limits on the amount they could use to purchase the land. There were also problems with draining the land that would have to be rectified at a cost and this would impinge on the price that could be offered for the land. Arena was a charitable trust, it did not aim to make a profit but it had to balance its books.

Mrs Amesbury informed that the land had planning permission to build twelve units of affordable housing to meet local need. It was an exceptions site on the edge of the village and would not normally be granted planning permission. A Section 106 Agreement had been drawn up but not signed.

It was noted that Arena had been in negotiation with a member of the County Property Officer's staff last year to purchase the land. Arena's affordability remained the same. They could not increase the offer.

Members considered the size of the land in question, the cost per acre the County Property Officer required and the amount Arena were prepared to offer.

The Chairman reported that as the Parish Council had now purchased land for recreational purposes on Fiddlers Lane it was no longer interested in acquiring any of the land to the North of Lodge Lane, Saughall in the ownership of the County Council. All it was interested in now in this regard was facilitating the provision of affordable housing.

AGREED: That

- (1) Arena would make Cheshire County Council a formal offer for the land it required to build 12 units of affordable housing;
- (2) the County Property Officer would keep the Parish Council informed of progress;
- (3) the County Property Officer would request that the County Farms Panel have a fresh look at Arena's proposal to purchase the land and build affordable homes on it and make a decision in light of the offer made; and
- (4) Mr Clay would ensure that the Clerk received a copy of the plans for the site.

#### 42 INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT ON 2002/03 ACCOUNTS

The Internal Auditor reported that he was happy with the 2002/03 Accounts. He had queries in relation to the following which were answered satisfactorily:

- ?? Ownership of bus shelters
- ?? List of assets
- ?? Six new benches
- ?? Insurance
- ?? Clerk's record of expenses

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Internal Auditor be thanked for his report;
- (2) the six new benches be included on the List of Assets for the Financial Year 2003/04; and
- (3) the Clerk's record of expenses be initialled by the Chairman in future.

43 GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK

(a) Planning Permission

The Chairman reported that Chester City Council's Principal Planning Officer, Mr Mark Dickens, had informed on the following comments from the Authority's Nature Conservation Officer, Mr M O'Kell, that needed to be addressed/resolved:

- ?? "A separate Hedgerow Removal Notice has been submitted. Mr O'Kell does not consider this separate application necessary as the removal of the hedge can be considered as part of this planning application.
- ?? Great Crested Newts have been found on the application site and in the adjacent pond. The removal of a section of the hedgerow is likely to result in a loss of Great Crested Newt habitat. The proposed works to the ponds would also result in a disturbance to their habitat. (these works may require a DEFRA licence). The ecologist will need to supply further details to clarify whether or not a licence is required.
- ?? The ecologist has recommended that an additional pond is excavated and the creation of linking habitat to the existing pond. These are not shown on the submitted plans. The areas indicated as "environmental areas" are segmented by pitch 2. Amended plans need to be submitted to address these issues.
- ?? There is an area of scrub adjacent to the garden pond that contains Great Crested Newts. This area should be retained as it provides foraging and hibernation habitat. It would also be appropriate to retain the hedge adjacent to this scrub area. An additional length of hedge could also be retained to compensate for the loss of other areas of habitat.
- ?? The justification for the loss of hedge is in part that it would discourage Great Crested Newts from falling into gully pots on the road side. Has the ecologist considered the use of sustainable urban drainage systems as an alternative?"

Also raised was the following issue:

- ?? "The bowling green is shown on the submitted plans as Phase II, but it is identified in the supporting statement as being a proposed facility, as such I presume that you want this recreational facility to be considered as part of this planning application? Please can you confirm if this is the case or not. This will assist me in the consultation with the public about the application."

Mr Dickens requested that the issues raised above be addressed and that supporting written statements and amended plans be submitted by 11 July 2003 so

he could report to the Planning Board on 30 July 2003. If the deadline could not be met the application could be reported to the Planning Board in September.

The Chairman had spoken to Mr O’Kell and Dr Hodgson, the ecologist who had written a report, and was taking the necessary action with a view to the application being considered by the Planning Board in September 2003.

(b) Tendering Process

The Committee was brought up to date with the tendering process. It was noted that certain issues needed to be clarified before the closing date for receipt of tenders.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the deadline for the receipt of tenders be extended from 25 July 2003 to 1 September 2003 in order that the Clerk can consult with the Council’s technical advisor and ensure the process is being run fairly; and
- (2) Councillor B Kerr be requested to attend the next meeting of the Golden Jubilee Park Focus Group scheduled for 22 July 2003.

(c) Youth Provision during the Summer Holidays

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a nominal sum be provided to secure goal nets and Councillor RA Storrar be requested to take the necessary action and acquire them; and
- (2) the spare bus shelter currently in the care of Councillor RA Storrar be erected on the Fiddlers Lane Playing Field for the duration of the school holidays, subject to youngsters not causing a nuisance

(d) Chester City Council’s Playground Grants

Mr Clive Roberts of Chester City Council reported that there were two areas which cover such schemes the Small Project Grants and the dedicated fund for Parished Area Play Provision.

The Small Project Grants had mainly been allocated this year but the Council could apply for the new Dedicated Parish Fund Grant. There was £25K in this pot for 2003/04 and consultation on the criteria had recently been carried out via the Local Area Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Clerk be requested to contact Ms Anne Lancaster, Area Committee Manager for the Rural Wards, for details; and
- (2) a bid be submitted for funding for two basketball nets and a football wall.

(e) Trees

The Tree Warden reported that he intended to obtain a quote to take out the trees that were dangerous.

RESOLVED:

That the Tree Warden be requested to take the necessary action to ensure that the dangerous trees were removed as soon as possible.

44 CHESHIRE ASSOCIATION OF TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS  
ANNUAL MEETING 2003 – MOTIONS

RESOLVED:

That no notices of motion be put forward this year.

45 SAUGHALL POLICING

There had been no new developments and no progress made.

RESOLVED:

That the situation continue to be monitored.

46 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY  
CHESHIRE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

RESOLVED:

That no training sessions be attended by the Clerk or Members at the current time.

47 SAUGHALL YOUTH

The Chairman had received a letter from Mr Bryan Jones asking for the Parish Council's support for an initiative to provide help, care and the use of facilities for the youth of the village in association with the two churches in Saughall and by working alongside the current youth organisations.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairman be requested to respond to Mr Jones as appropriate and put him in touch with Mrs P Povey who runs the Monday Youth Club in the Vernon Institute Annexe.