

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH
COUNCIL held on 7 February 2005 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
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 (Tree Warden)
Councillor Mrs M Wynne-Eyton
Councillor Mrs J Young

Mr K Stinson, Chairman, Saughall Homewatch

20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Mrs J Johnson
Councillor A Marsden
PC R Fisher
County Councillor D Rowlands

21 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

22 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 10 and 17 January 2005 be confirmed as a correct record

23 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

24 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – AUTHORISATION OF THE
QUALIFIED PERSON AND AMENDMENTS TO SCHEDULE 12A OF THE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

A letter from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Phil Hope MP, at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister informed of the authorisation of Qualified Persons under Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for Parish and Town Councils and Parish Meetings and the Secretary of State's decision to authorise the following officers as the qualified person for the purposes of Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for parishes in England:

Authority	Primary Authorisation	Secondary Authorisation
a) Parish and Town Councils	Clerk to the Council	Chairman of the Council
b) Parish Meetings	Chairman of the Parish Meeting	Proper Officer of the District Council

Section 36 of the Act provided for information to be exempt from disclosure where that information would be likely to inhibit;

- ? the free and frank provision of advice; or
- ? the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation; or
- ? the effective conduct of public affairs.

The exemption would only apply if the reasonable opinion of a qualified person was that any of the above effects would be likely to follow from a disclosure. The qualified person for each public authority falling within Section 36(5)(0) of the Act must be authorised by a Minister of the Crown as provided for by Section 36(5)(0)(iii). Public authorities falling within that Section included Parishes in England. More than one person may be authorised as a qualified person.

The Clerk to the Council, for Parish Councils, the Chairman, in the case of Parish Meetings, was to be the primary qualified person. Where they were absent, responsibility for varying out the functions of the qualified person would fall to the Chairman of the Council in the case of Parish Councils and the proper officer of the District Council in the case of Parish Meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State's letter be noted.

25 PARISH COUNCIL SURGERIES

(a) Surgery on 5 February 2005

Councillor Mrs JE Storrar reported on the proceedings of the last Parish Council Surgery on 5 February 2005.

It was noted that the pathway between Fieldway and the garages required attention because youths were causing a nuisance on it in the evenings. Councillor C Moss had been in touch with Cheshire County Council's Countryside Access Manager, Ms J Kravse. She had informed in a letter dated 25 January 2005 that the path was not recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way and therefore there was no reason, in principle, why the residents could not close off the access to avoid problems. However, she added the proviso that the Definitive Map and Statement may not record all public rights of way which had come into being. Therefore, it was possible that if the access was closed off, someone may claim that a public footpath has come into being as a result of at least twenty years' use without let or hindrance. If this was to be the case, the Countryside Access Manager would be bound to assist such a claimant with advice on how

they could submit a formal claim for the route to be added to the Definitive Map and Statement, but the staff would also try to identify whether the claimant's evidence was sufficient to satisfy the necessary legal tests.

The County Council would not act to reopen the access unless the legal process involved in pursuing any claim was successful and this could take several years.

Members noted that the footpath in question was in the ownership of the Chester Housing Trust. The Council had requested its closure on a number of occasions but had met with resistance as all the people consulted had not wanted the pathway closed.

Councillor Mrs JE Storrar provided the Council with a report on nuisance youth activity/anti-social behaviour recorded on the CCTV equipment in the Parish Room. Members noted how invaluable this equipment would be if a serious incident took place.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the Clerk be requested to write to the Chester Housing Trust to inform that the Parish Council intended to close the path from Fieldway to the old garages by the end of the current financial year; and

(2) the District Engineer be alerted to concerns expressed over other pathways in the village and be asked to rectify the problems associated with tree roots and paving stones.

(b) Surgery on 5 March 2005

RESOLVED:

That Councillor C Moss be requested to cover the Parish Council Surgery scheduled for Saturday, 5 March 2005 between 10:00am and 10:45am in the Parish Room.

26 ACCOUNTS

(a) Payments made since the meeting of the Council held on 10 January 2005:

Financial Year 2004/2005	£	Cheque No
Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council (Street Cleaning & Grass Cutting)	1,049.67	101769
Mrs S Hudspeth (Exp)	66.75	101770
Mrs S Hudspeth (Sal)	555.54	101771

(b) Receipts

Interest to 21 January 2005 (14 Day Account)	51.36
Interest to 23 January 2005 (Treasurer Account)	0.17

27 PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council's website was up and running satisfactorily and that the problems with the mailbox had been resolved following the intervention of Cheshire County Council's Chief Executive, Mr Jeremy Taylor.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

28 POLICE/HOMEWATCH

(a) Police

PC R Fisher had tendered his apologies for the meeting as it had fallen on his rest day. He had informed that he had been on night shift over the weekend and spent some time in the village and that it had been quiet. He had noted that the youths who usually hung around the bus shelter on Church Road had moved into the woods off Lodge Lane. They were away from the houses but were still dropping litter.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

(b) Homewatch

Mr K Stinson was in attendance at the meeting to present his monthly report in person. His report included details of:

- ? an arson attempt on the church Road bus shelter;
- ? the usual problems with youths in Darlington Crescent/Rakeway area, especially at the back of the Wain House bungalows;
- ? destruction of the glass in the telephone box in Hermitage Road near to the Edgerton Arms Public House.

Mr Stinson reported that there had been no improvement in the situation. Gangs of youths continued to vandalise property, drink in the streets (some underage), drop litter and it was suspected that some were trading in and using drugs. These activities continued late into the night and often involved very young children.

There was a concern that police officers were rarely on hand in the village and that many local people had stopped reporting incidents to the police because of their inaction.

Mr Stinson also raised concerns that the police were not co-operating with the Homewatch and that without this much needed co-operation the Homewatch would have no alternative but to disband.

(c) Meeting with the Divisional Commander

The Chairman reported that he and Councillors RA Storrar and Mrs J Young had met with Superintendent Ian Hopkins and Inspector Rob Woodward on 3 February 2005. Superintendent Hopkins outlined his Plan to ensure a more robust response. Saughall policing would be included in the Chester Outer Sector rather than with the Chester Rural Sector, as now. He felt that the village would receive a better and quicker response from Blacon Police Station than from Mickle Trafford or Tattenhall.

The Chester Policing team that would be responsible for Saughall, Blacon and Upton would consist of one Sergeant and five PCs. If Saughall remained in the Rural Sector the officer responsible would have a very large area to cover as at present. Members agreed that this new approach would be better for Saughall and that it should bring about improvement in respect of response times, etc.

The new Neighbourhood Policing Plan would change the whole culture of response and dealing with incidents generally. Currently, Cheshire Constabulary received 3,000 999 calls and 16,000 none emergency calls per week. These 999 calls covered a whole range of issues including some that were very serious.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Chairman's report be received;
- (2) Superintendent Hopkins be informed that this Council agrees with his Policing Plan for Saughall;
- (3) Inspector Woodward be requested to host a Police Forum in Saughall on the same evening as the Parish Assembly in May 2005 and to provide an item for the Parish Council's Newsletter on the new policing arrangements for Saughall and Shotwick Park; and
- (4) a serious debate on the policing arrangements put in place be held in September 2005 when the Council reviews its budgetary position.

(d) Obstructions to Highways and Pathways

Again, Members detailed their concerns regarding motorists parking on the village paths. They also discussed the problems overgrown hedges caused to pedestrians.

It was an offence to unlawfully obstruct the highway and could have dangerous consequences.

RESOLVED:

That the problems associated with obstructing highways and pathways be highlighted in the Parish Council's Newsletter.

29 PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE A YOUTH SHELTER IN THE VILLAGE

The Council discussed the merits and demerits of providing a Youth Shelter that would only be used by a small element of youths who opted out of any organised activity.

If a Shelter was to be provided a suitable place would have to be found at which to erect it. There would also have to be consultation with young people on what they would like to see provided for them and assurances given that those who used it would not try to destroy it, drop litter or cause a nuisance in the area it was located.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Inspector Woodward and local youths be requested to offer their views on the proposal to erect a Youth Shelter in the village at the Annual Assembly; and
- (2) this proposal be discussed by the Council again in twelve months time when it is aware of how successful the new Policing Plan has been.

30 CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

Councillor Mrs D Whitton provided a report on the safe storage of the Christmas lights.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

31 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

Members considered the Minutes of the Planning Committee and the Parish Plan Steering Panel and commented on the proceedings. Of particular concern was the need to identify land suitable for burial within the Parish as the churchyard was nearly full. This issue would be kept in mind and an approach be made to Cheshire County Council's County Property Manager.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the following meetings be received:

Planning Committee held on 10 January 2005
Parish Plan Steering Panel held on 20 January 2005

32 PARISH PLAN

It was reported that the Parish Plan had been published on 31 January 2005 and hard copies had been sent to the Countryside Agency. A copy could also be downloaded from the Council's website.

The Chairman had extended and accepted an invitation to make a presentation on the work behind the Parish Plan's compilation at a meeting of the North Gowy Area Committee on 10 March 2005.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) all those who contributed to the Parish Plan initiative be thanked for their help; and
- (3) copies of the snapshot report be hand delivered to every house in Saughall and Shotwick Park along with the next edition of the Council's Newsletter.

33 GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK DEVELOPMENT

It was reported that, in the absence of the Project Co-ordinator, little progress had been made in generating funding to finance the Golden Jubilee Park development.

A meeting of the Funding Working Group had been held on 13 January 2005 where it had been agreed to obtain quotes to lay a pathway around the periphery of the park and for some play equipment so they could be subjects of funding bids to external funding organisations. The Clerk had written to a number of funders requesting grant aid but no positive responses had been received.

Mr Mike Bell had been in touch with the Chairman and suggested that a grant expert be employed. He had a list of companies who provided this service and agreed to obtain costings.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and a further report be brought to the April 2005 meeting of the Council.

34 VERNON INSTITUTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Councillor RA Storrar reported that the top car park was being made into a play area. A Chairman had still not been appointed since Mr B Huxley had resigned but Mr B Murphy was Acting-Chairman and Mr H Dobson was the Treasurer.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received; and
- (2) Councillor RA Storrar be requested to inform the Vernon Institute Management Committee (whilst offering his apologies for not attending the meeting the following day) that Members of the Parish Council wish to meet with some of its representatives to discuss the Vernon Institute refurbishment plans and funding provision.

35 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

The Council received reports of proceedings in respect of the following outside body meetings attended by Members:

- (a) Cheshire County Council's Annual Town and Parish Councils' Conference
7:00pm on Thursday, 3 February 2005 at Nantwich Civic Hall

There had been a debate on the falling rolls of schools across the County and the need to increase community use of school buildings.

There had been a discussion on the New Children's Act and on the role of the Council as a Corporate Parent.

Recycling Policy had been under discussion and it had been noted that the residents of Vale Royal only had a refuse collection once a fortnight.

There had been approximately eighty people at the event and it was considered that it had been reasonable well attended.

- (b) Chester Police Forum

The Chief Constable had been in attendance. Concerns had been raised about not being given any feedback after reporting an incident. It had been agreed that this approach was remiss and improvements would be made in this respect. Communications particularly in the rural area were a cause for concern.

36 CIRCULARS

The following circulars had been received. Any one wishing to see a copy would contact the Clerk.

Chester City Council's The Past Year – Annual Review of Chester Archaeology
Cheshire County Council's The Paying Field
Chester City Council's Council Meeting Agenda 26 January 2005
Chester CVS Voluntary Voice Winter 2004/2005
Chester City Council's Ethics & Standards Committee Agenda