

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

In attendance: 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 Mrs J Young

Mr K Stinson, Chairman Saughall Homewatch

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Councillor C Wynne-Eyton (Tree Warden)
Councillor Mrs M Wynne-Eyton
PC R Fisher
Mr K Stinson, Chairman, Saughall Homewatch

38 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

39 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

Mrs Howden of Saughall Hey had informed the Clerk that she wished to speak to the Council. She was very concerned that access to the houses in Saughall Hey was poor.

Mrs Howden informed the Council that an ambulance had been called to take her son, Paul, to hospital. Unfortunately, it had become stuck on the grassed area in front of Saughall Hey. Another vehicle had to pull the ambulance off the grass and the paramedic concerned was being disciplined for driving onto the grass. Mrs Howden was fighting for the paramedic as she had flagged him onto the grass and he had driven on with Paul's best interests at heart.

Members heard how tragically Paul Howden had died at home. It had been a matter of life or death and Mrs Howden considered the whole incident to be degrading. Mrs Howden told the Council that if there had been a service road her son would have been alive today. She was bringing this matter to Members attention in an attempt to prevent anything similar happening again. Residents of Saughall Hey needed access for emergency vehicles.

The Chairman offered Mrs Howden sincerest condolences on behalf of all Members of the Council. He also gave her an assurance that serious consideration would be given

by the Council to the wider access issues to houses on Saughall Hey and to the health and safety of the residents.

RESOLVED:

That access for emergency vehicles to Saughall Hey be considered at a future Committee meeting.

40 PARISH COUNCIL SURGERIES

(a) Surgery held on 5 March 2005

Councillor C Moss had been on duty at the last Parish Council Surgery. He informed that representations had been made concerning the following:

- ? Lack of safety barriers around the pond in the Golden Jubilee Park.
- ? Graffiti on the door of the Scout Headquarters.
- ? The management of the Golden Jubilee Park site.
- ? Dog dirt.
- ? Overgrown hedges.
- ? Lack of free bus travel for over 60s.
- ? Cars parking on grass verges and pathways.

It was noted that the hedges in question had now been cut back and the District Engineer had been informed of the state of the verges caused by cars parking and would take necessary action. The Uniform Groups would remove the graffiti and the Parish Council's Newsletter would carry an item publicising the use of dog litter bins in the village. Bus passes for the over 60s was out of the Council's control.

The Council would take aboard the concerns expressed over the management of the Golden Jubilee Park development and safety issues regarding the ponds.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(b) Next Parish Council Surgery

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mrs P Humphrey be requested to take the next Parish Council Surgery at 10:00am on Saturday, 2 April 2005 and bring a report to the Council on its proceedings.

41 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 7 February 2005 be confirmed as a correct record.

42 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

It was noted that there were some Christmas lights still on the Christmas tree!

Also, the next Newsletter would be published within four weeks.

43 MINUTES OF COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Planning Committee held on 7 February 2005 be received.

44 ACCOUNTS

(a) Payments made since the meeting of the Council held on 7 February 2005:

Financial Year 2004/2005	£	Cheque No
Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council (Street Cleaning & Grass Cutting)	1,049.67	101772
Mrs S Hudspeth (Exp)	72.26	101774
Mrs S Hudspeth (Sal)	555.54	101775

(b) Payment held back

Cheshire County Council had invoiced the Council for £3,525.00 in respect of bus shelter maintenance. The Clerk had written out a cheque (No. 101773) for the amount. However, Members were not happy that the bus shelters were still without electrics.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to inform Ms Christine Garner of Cheshire County Council's Transport Co-ordination Service that the cheque would be held back until all necessary works on the bus shelters were complete.

(c) Receipts

Interest to 21 February 2005 (14 Day Account)	55.35
Interest to 23 February 2005 (Treasurer Account)	0.10

(d) Review of Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils

Over the past year or so Chester City Council had been carrying out a review in order to identify and implement a solution to help reduce the inequalities caused

by double taxation in parished areas. It had now resolved that a grant solution be implemented from 1 April 2005.

A “double taxation” grant was therefore to be distributed to each parish council and parish meeting based upon on the population of its area. A cheque would be sent to the Clerk in early April. The allocation for all parish councils and meetings for the financial year 2005/6 had been set at 50p per head of population.

Other issues relating to double taxation grant were as follows:

- ? The grant represents a general contribution towards the recognised problem of double taxation experienced by parishes within the district – it is not based on the particular financial circumstances of the Parish Council with regard to double taxation issues.
- ? The population figure to be used for allocation purposes will be based on the Registrar General’s Annual Estimates of Population as published within Cheshire County Council’s population estimates for the Chester District in December each year.
- ? Allocation for future years will be reviewed by the City Council during the budget setting process each year.
- ? Double taxation grant can be spent at the discretion of parish councils, parish meetings or Area Committees within their existing powers. Whilst such a grant would normally be spent on current functions, this is not a requirement.
- ? Payment for the full year’s allocation will be sent to parish clerks in early April each year.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(e) 2005-2006 National Salary Award for Local Council Clerks

The Council was asked to note the Salary Scales payable from 1 April 2005 as part of the three year pay settlement agreed last year.

Councillor B Kerr informed that the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks had reached an agreement on Salaries and Conditions of Service for Local Council Clerks in England and Wales. There was now a new model Contract of Employment and salaries were determined by 4 profiles.

RESOLVED:

That this item be deferred until further information is received from the Cheshire Association of Local Councils.

(a) Police

PC Robin Fisher had sent his apologies for not being able to attend the meeting along with a written report. He informed that he had spent a great deal of time in Saughall of late. This had included the previous two weekends, where in conjunction with the Special Constabulary, a high visibility patrol in and around various villages had been run. This had consisted of up to ten uniformed officers on foot around each location.

PC Fisher informed that there was a litter problem in the woodland that ran parallel to Church Road and that Gerry Hughes of Chester City Council had agreed to clear it up.

The Greyhound Public House had been broken into and there had been a few minor thefts from gardens and one garage break-in.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(b) Homewatch

Mr K Stinson had sent his apologies for not being able to attend the meeting along with a written report.

There had been a sighting of an armed man in the village. The police acted promptly and correctly by sealing off Saughall with an Armed Response Unit and arresting the culprit.

Three members of Saughall Homewatch had attended instruction, at the new Chester Police Station in Blacon, given by Dave Owen on the subject of Bogus Callers. Homewatch intended to pass on this useful information to groups and individuals.

Homewatch members had expressed a desire to resume Street Patrols however the police were uneasy even though Mr Stinson had set out guidelines. In view of the high visibility patrol initiative (referred to in PC Fisher's report) formal Homewatch patrols had been postponed.

Mr Stinson was concerned over the lack of feedback from the police when it had been furnished with information by the Homewatch.

RESOLVED:

That Mr Stinson's report be received

(c) Crime and Disorder

The Chairman informed of an incident at the Woodvale Stores involving the theft of cigarettes. The youth involved had then jumped into a car and asked the lady driving to take him to Blacon.

Councillor Mrs J Young reported that youths had been apprehended over the theft of a sit-on lawn mower.

Councillor B Kerr reported that a group of men were shooting on farmland that was part of the Shotwick Park Estate. The men had informed that they had a shooting permit from Cheshire County Council.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the reports be received; and

(2) the Clerk be requested to bring the shooting incidents to the attention of the County Property Manager and ascertain if the shooting was being carried out with his permission.

(d) Community Wardens Scheme

RESOLVED:

That this issue be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 24 March 2005.

46 QUALITY PARISH COUNCILS

The Quality Parish Council Scheme was a government initiative to encourage capacity building within local councils.

Chalky White, Regional Development Officer at the Cheshire Association of Local Councils, had been invited to attend the meeting to inform on the process to be gone through and the merits of achieving Quality Parish Council status. Mr White provided Members with copies of "A Guide to becoming a Quality Council" and attempted to flag up the benefits that it was hoped a Quality Parish Council could enjoy at some stage in the future.

The point was made that those Parish Councils that did not embrace change "will wither on the vine". Parish Councils needed to be aware of "the bigger picture" and would be able to take advantage of opportunities that were expected to present themselves in future years.

Members considered the tests to be satisfied before the Council could achieve Quality Status. They were as follows:

? **Test 1 – Electoral Mandate**

? On first accreditation only:...At least 80% of all Council seats were filled at the beginning of the current four year term by Members who stood for election.

- ? On re-accreditation....All Council seats filled at the beginning of the current term by Members who stood for election at that time.
- ? **Test 2 – Qualifications of the Clerk**
 - “A competent Clerk”
 - ? Certificate in Local Council Administration awarded by the Monitoring and Verification Board (M&VB) under the auspices of the National Training Strategy (NTS).
 - ? Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy or Local Council Administration awarded by the University of Gloucestershire.
- ? **Test 3 – Council Meetings**
 - ? The Council must meet on at least 6 occasions every year.
 - ? Notices of meetings must be publicly displayed at least 3 days before a meeting.
 - ? Minutes of meetings must be available for inspection by electors.
 - ? Time must be allowed at each meeting for public participation.
- ? **Test 4 – Effective Communication**
 - ? Publication of regular information, perhaps in the form of a newsletter, four times a year, including....
 - ? Information on Councillors and how they can be contacted.
 - ? A synopsis of the Annual Report.
 - ? Information must be readily available at public sites across the parish.
- ? **Test 5 – Annual Report**
 - ? Publication of an Annual Report, including certain information, within prescribed timescales and made readily available at sites across the parish.
- ? **Test 6 – Accountability**
 - ? Accounts prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Accounting and Audit Regulations.
 - ? Unqualified Accounts.
- ? **Test 7 – Ethical Framework**
 - ? Adoption of a local Code of Conduct.

It was noted that the Council could easily meet all but one of the Tests. Unfortunately, the Clerk, although being very well qualified in the field of Local Government, did not have the “basic” qualification required and was not interested in obtaining it.

The Council then turned its attention to the benefits of accreditation. It was told that Quality Parish Councils could play an enhanced role in their communities and in partnership with Principal Authorities as follows:

- ? as an integral part of all relevant consultation and co-ordination arrangements set up by Principal Authorities and other service providers on how services are delivered in the parish council area;

- ? in the management and delivery of services which parish councils may carry out either on behalf of the Principal Authority, or by using their existing powers; and
- ? working with partners on the provision of access points to information on services of Principal Authorities and other service providers.

The Chairman told the Council that if it decided to go for accreditation the work of the Clerk would need to be reviewed because there would not be time to service the numerous meetings and put together a portfolio to gain the necessary qualification. Members would have to be prepared to do more themselves and be responsible for their own newsletter that would have to be published at least four times a year.

The Clerk was asked for her opinion during the meeting and she informed that she had heard nothing to change her mind or convince her that the Council or herself had anything to gain from becoming a Quality Parish Council at this time.

RESOLVED:

That a decision on the approach to Quality Parish Council Status be deferred until the next meeting of the Council scheduled for Monday, 4 April 2005.