

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH
COUNCIL held on 5 September 2011 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs K Ford
Councillor DF Holman
Councillor WI Humphrey (Homewatch Chairman)
Councillor Mrs J Johnson
Councillor B Kerr
Councillor Mrs J Knox
Councillor RK Shukla
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor Mrs D Whitton
Councillor Mrs JM Young (in the Chair)
Councillor PP Young

Bob Salisbury, Internal Auditor
CWAC Councillor B Crowe

147. URGENT BUSINESS – GYPSY AND TRAVELLER AND TRAVELLING
SHOWPERSON ACCOMMODATION

The Chairman reported that the Council was aware that Cheshire West and Chester Council's Executive would be making key decisions at its next meeting on 7 September 2011 about Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and that a proposed transit site was earmarked for Oakwood Farm, Saughall on land within the Green Belt. In view of the strength of feeling this had generated in the local area she proposed to consider the implications of this proposal as Urgent Business. She also proposed that that Standing Orders be suspended during the consideration of this item of business so that members of the public, who were in attendance, could ask questions and contribute to the debate.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairman's proposals regarding the Urgent Business item and the suspension of Standing Orders be endorsed.

148. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER AND TRAVELLING SHOWPERSON
ACCOMMODATION

Cheshire West and Chester Council's (CWAC) Executive would be making a determination on a report at its next meeting on 7 September 2011 that invited it to consider the recently completed Study to Identify Potential Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Sites in its administrative area, undertaken by consultants ekosgen for the Council.

The level of need for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson accommodation within CWAC had been identified through the Cheshire Partnership Area Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment (GTAA) published in January 2007. It identified a need for

between 31 and 45 residential Gypsies and Travellers pitches and 10 transit pitches between 2006 and 2016 in the Borough. The identified level for Travelling Showpeople was 10 plots.

The report informed that to date, none of the additional pitches/plots identified by the GTAA had been provided, resulting in a significant backlog of need. The lack of Gypsy and Traveller residential provision had led to problems such as unauthorised developments in the Green Belt being granted temporary planning permissions, often at appeal and the lack of alternative provision had been sufficient, to establish the 'very special circumstances' needed to justify 'inappropriate' development in the Green Belt.

In October 2009, Cheshire West and Chester Council had commissioned consultants ekosgen (supported by consultation specialists Vision Twenty One) to carry out a study to identify potential Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson sites in the borough, in order to meet the need identified in the GTAA.

Although not part of the ekosgen study, a further site had been identified that it was claimed could meet the identified need for transit pitches. This site was at Oakwood Farm, Saughall. This site was in the ownership of CWAC Council and surplus to its requirements. CWAC Council believed that this site was ideally situated along the major travel route of the A5117 and that its development would assist in the further reduction of the number of unauthorised encampments in the Chester and Ellesmere Port areas. The site would provide 15 transit pitches and could be developed in the short term. The site did fall within the Green Belt where this type of development was classed as 'inappropriate' development, however, it was considered that CWAC Council could make a case arguing that there were 'very special circumstances' to justify its development. The report informed that any 'very special circumstances' case would, of course, be rigorously assessed through any formal planning application process.

Members pointed out that Oakwood Farm did not feature at all in the ekosgen report, which did not, in fact, recommend any transit sites. Had it been considered by ekosgen it would have been discarded at Stage 3 – Filtering the Long List - which discounted sites in the Green Belt. Members believed that the only reason it had been selected was that CWAC Council owned the site and it has become superfluous to its requirements.

Despite an assertion to the contrary in the report by Charlie Seward, Director of Regeneration and Culture, the site was most definitely in the Green Belt and was a greenfield site, not a brownfield site. Members agreed that fact alone should have ruled it out of further consideration, in accordance with the criteria used in the report prepared by ekosgen on behalf of CWAC Council.

Mr M Cowle, who was in attendance at the meeting, informed that he had been taking soundings from local people who had grave concerns over the suitability of the proposed site at Oakwood Farm on the following grounds:

- (a) the site was not included in the original ekosgen report and therefore was not assessed for its suitability – why?

- (b) the proposed site was on Green Belt land;
- (c) the site did not have a main sewer and it was assumed that it would only have a small septic tank suitable for one dwelling;
- (d) to have the proposed 15 pitches would mean that Green Belt land would be used; and
- (e) on safety grounds for traffic at the location, as it is on a main feeder road for the motorway, also makes it an unsuitable location and the major changes to the junction to improve safety and traffic flow would have been a total waste of money.

Members were aware that Carillion had been permitted to use the Oakwood Farm site as a Depot during the construction of the Deeside Park Junctions scheme on the condition that the site was returned to farmland afterwards. Following Carillion's departure this had been done. The farmhouse and 2.88 acres of land had been marketed by Wright Manley and were intended to go up for auction in April 2010, but were subsequently, withdrawn prior to the auction taking place, despite generating a lot of local interest. In the light of what now was happening, Members now believed that this was because this valuable site had already been earmarked by CWAC Council as a potential gypsy site. If this was the case they considered that a public consultation exercise should have been undertaken at that time.

The Council was informed that advice from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the location of gypsy transit sites said that they must be located where gypsies and travellers want to stop. There was no evidence that Oakwood Farm represented an ideal stopping place, in fact the ekosgen report informed that the gypsies and travellers, consulted on the location of transit sites in the GTAA study in 2007, preferred Ellesmere Port and between Winsford and Chester. There was no evidence of illegal encampments in the immediate area, which suggested that transient caravans were parking elsewhere. The DCLG's advice also stated that "*one-off isolated sites cannot work...and will not be seen as a resource by Gypsy/Travellers*".

CWAC Councillor Brian Crowe ascertained that no one present was supportive of CWAC Council's proposal for Oakwood Farm. He set out the timescale for a scrutiny call-in which would go ahead if the Executive agreed the recommendation regarding Oakwood Farm as detailed in the report. He also encouraged as many people as possible to go to the Executive meeting and to speak against the proposal.

It was noted that Stephen Mosley MP was very supportive of the Parish Council's resistance to this proposed inappropriate development on Green Belt land. If at the end of the day, following call-in the CWAC Council's Executive was still minded to provide a Gypsy and Traveller site at Oakwood Farm, a planning application would be considered by the Planning Committee. However, if the Principal Authority granted itself planning consent against its own Planning Policy, the Minister would be asked to call the decision in, leading to a Planning Inquiry.

It was reported that the Parish Council had not been consulted on the proposal. The report had been published the previous Tuesday and earlier in the day the Chairman had been invited to attend a meeting with the Chief Executive of CWAC Council, Mr Steve Robinson, in his office in HQ in Chester along with Councillor Brain Crowe. At the meeting she had been told that the proposal within the report to the Executive 'would have to go through the due process'.

The meeting was told that Councillor Herbert Manley, CWAC Council's Prosperity Executive Member had been quoted as saying "It is important to stress that there will be consultation with the public both before and after a shortlist is agreed and also at the planning application stage". However, the ekosgen report had been kept secret until a week before the Executive meeting. There had been no public consultation on any of the proposed sites and no reasons were forthcoming of why this was.

The Parish Council did not believe that a planning application should be presented at all for this site. It also knew that once the planning stage was reached, only valid planning reasons could be presented to and considered by the Planning Board. The Council believed that CWAC Council's Executive would not take account of the correct information in relation to this site in reaching its decision at its meeting on 7 September 2011 and that this was due to an administrative error by the report's author in assuming the site was not a greenfield site.

It was reported that in July 2011 Councillor Mike Jones, the Leader of CWAC Council, had been quoted as saying "*Gypsy and Traveller Sites within the Green Belt will remain "inappropriate development" which...is only acceptable if justified by 'very special circumstances'.*" Members were interested to know what the exceptional circumstances were that uniquely applied to the Oakwood Farm site. Also, the question was asked that if planning permission was to be granted and 15 pitches were made available for Gypsies and Travellers on a transit site and more people turned up than the site could accommodate, where the overspill would encamp? It was also considered that if planning permission was granted as 'an exception site' it may open the floodgates for further development within the Green Belt.

The Council then turned its attention to the criteria that should be met when selecting a site for such development e.g. the nearest primary school, All Saints in Saughall, was more than 600m from the site. This school and the primary schools at Capenhurst and Mollington were full – a number of local children had been refused places. The nearest secondary school was in Upton-by-Chester, which was substantially more than 1,500m from the site. There were some local shops, including a Post Office, in Saughall, but it could not be called a Shopping Centre, and it was more than 800m from the site. The nearest Superstore was well over 2,000m away in Ellesmere Port. There was no Sports Centre in the vicinity, the nearest being in either Ellesmere Port, Chester or Neston.

After substantial deliberations by Members and members of the public in attendance it was

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of the report prepared for consideration by CWAC Council's Executive on 7 September 2011 be noted; and
- (2) a list of the points made at this meeting be made and as many people as possible be requested to attend the Cheshire West and Chester Council's Executive meeting on 7 September 2011 to put these points across and demonstrate the strength of feeling that there is in respect of the proposal and that Saughall residents will not tolerate inappropriate development in the Green Belt and will do all that they can to protect Green Belt land.

STANDING ORDERS BACK IN FORCE

149. PUBLIC SPEAKING
- CHESTER HALF MARATHON, SUNDAY 13 MAY 2012

Messers Andy White and Chris Hulse had given five clear days written notice that they wished to address the Council about proposals for the 2012 Chester Half Marathon. They reported that the Chester Half Marathon had been a successful local event for a number of years and would be 30 years old in 2012. In the build up to the Olympic Games they expected an increased level of interest in the event. Therefore, their plans now were to expand the race to provide a major showcase event for Chester giving a significant boost to the local economy, while also raising substantial funds for local and national charities.

The proposed route was outlined and included Lodge Lane, Church Road and Hermitage Road in Saughall. It has been planned to minimise the impact on host communities and the Council was being consulted to see if this could be achieved.

Members were informed that the planning and operation of this event would comply with the Health and Safety Executive's Event Safety Guide and the Home Office Guidance for the Safety of Small and Sporting Events. To ensure the safety of runners, spectators and members of the public, the race would take place on closed roads. During the road closures, diversions would be in place. Roads would only be closed for the minimum period necessary to ensure safety. The aim was to create as small a footprint as possible to minimise disruption to residents and businesses and to work with local communities to help them to benefit from the event.

There was scope to grow this annual event in a controlled manner during the future years and make it one of the UK's biggest half marathon races. It would begin from the Racecourse in Chester at 9:00am and be finished by 12:30/13:00 hours.

Members were broadly supportive of the proposals for the future Chester Half Marathon but noted that the rolling road closures would in fact mean that they

would effectively close off the bus route for three hours. This would be communicated to parishioners through the Council's Parish Newsletter.

The Council was interested in the monies being raised through this event and whether there would be any external funding opportunities that could benefit the Saughall community. Messers White and Hulse indicated that there may well be grant aid available and they would be open to an approach from the Parish Council in respect of this.

RESOLVED:

That Messers White and Hulse be thanked for their attendance at the meeting and for sharing their proposals for the future Chester Half Marathon with the Council.

150. APOLOGIES FOR AUTHORISED ABSENCE

All Members of the Council were in attendance.

151. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

152. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 4 July 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

153. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

(a) Planning held on 4 July and 1 August 2011

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 4 July and 1 August 2011 be received.

(b) General Purposes held on 1 August 2011

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 1 August 2011 be received.

(c) Finance and Business Development held on 8 August 2011

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Business Development Committee held on 8 August 2011 be received.

154. ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE AND REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS

Further to Minute No. 131/2011 it was noted that Councillor Mrs D Whitton had today declared her acceptance of office and registered her interests.

155. COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

(a) Committee Structure

The Membership of each Committee/Panel/Working Group had been determined at the Annual Council meeting on 9 May 2011 and at the Council meeting on 4 July 2011.

Councillor Mrs D Whitton had not been able to attend the last two meetings, so had sent her apologies. Consequently, she was asked if she wanted to sit on any of the Council's Committees/Panel/Working Group.

She agreed to sit on the Planning and General Purposes Committees.

Councillor RA Storrar also indicated that he would like to sit on the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED:

The Membership of the Council's Committees/Panel/Working Group be revised as follows:

(a) Planning Committee

Councillors WI Humphrey, Mrs J Johnson, Mrs J Knox, Mrs JE Storrar, RA Storrar, Mrs D Whitton and Mrs JM Young.

(b) Finance and Business Development Committee

Councillors Mrs K Ford, D Holman, B Kerr, RK Shukla, A Warrington, Mrs JM Young and PP Young.

(c) General Purposes Committee

Councillors B Kerr, WI Humphrey, Mrs J Johnson, Mrs J Knox, Mrs JE Storrar, A Warrington, Mrs D Whitton and Mrs JM Young.

(d) "Field Site Panel" (formerly the Field Committee)

Councillors WI Humphrey, RA Storrar, A Warrington and Mrs JM Young.

(e) Affordable Housing (Lodge Lane) Working Group

Councillors WI Humphrey, B Kerr, Mrs JE Storrar, A Warrington and Mrs JM Young.

156. MEMBERS' TRAINING

Chairmanship Training

Councillor Mrs K Ford had recently undergone Chairmanship Training. She reported on what she had learnt and that she had enjoyed the training event. She was now eager to undertake the other part of the Chairmanship Training that would be held later in the year.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mrs K Ford's report on the recent training she had received be noted.

157. CHAIRMAN'S BI-MONTHLY REPORT

Councillor Mrs JM Young informed as follows:

- The Chinese Takeaway now has a licence to sell liquor.
- Most of the moles in the Golden Jubilee Park had not been caught.
- Chester District Housing Trust (CDHT) was selling 67 Church Road to release monies to use on its affordable housing scheme on Lodge Lane.
- There had been some damage to cricket equipment and the Safety Wardens had been informed.
- The Cheshire railings around the Golden Jubilee Park had all been painted.
- She had met with Rob Callow, Cheshire West and Chester Council's Area Manager, Rural West, to discuss various problems. As a consequence, the Saughall Neighbourhood Management Team will carry out a village survey and present its findings to various bodies.
- Remembrance Sunday, 13 November 2011 – the Service has been booked for 2:30pm at All Saints Church.
- A meet and greet event will be held at Wain Court and CDMT would invite Members to attend.
- A live wire by a telegraph pole on Hermitage Road had been reported to CWAC Council's Area Highways Engineer but no action had been taken.

CWAC Councillor Brian Crowe agreed to find out from the Area Highways Engineer, why the live wire issue had not been actioned.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

158. PARISH COUNCIL SURGERIES

(a) Surgery held on Saturday, 3 September 2011

Councillor PP Young had presided over the last Parish Council Surgery which had been held at both the Co-op Store and the Farmers' Market and reported that he had also been accompanied by four other Members and Stephen Moseley MP. (Minute No. 148 refers)

The Surgery had been dominated by the concerns being raised by parishioners over the proposal by Cheshire West and Chester Council to provide a Gypsy and Traveller Transit site on Green Belt land

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

(b) Surgeries on Saturday, 1 October and 5 November 2011

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mrs D Whitton be requested to preside over the Surgery on 1 October 2011 at both the Co-op Store and the Farmers' Market between 10:00am and 10:45am, Councillor A Warrington be requested to preside over the Surgery on 5 November 2011 to be held at both the Co-op Store and the Farmers' Market between 10:00am and 10:45am and Cheshire West and Chester Councillor Brian Crowe be invited to join them.

159. CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL
- LOCAL MEMBERS' REPORT

Councillor B Crowe's report had been provided earlier in the meeting and had related to CWAC Council's proposal to provide a Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site on Green Belt land at Oakwood farm.

Councillor B Kerr asked Councillor Crowe to make representations to get improvements carried out (Minute No 148/2011 refers) where the bus stops by Aspen Grove on Hermitage Road as current arrangements for alighting were dangerous.

Councillor B Kerr also reported that trees in Greenway required attention as there were interfering with the overhead cables.

RESOLVED:

That CWAC Councillor Crowe be requested to ask CWAC Council officers to take the necessary action to address the problems detailed above.

160. OFFER RECEIVED TO RE-DESIGN THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

Councillor Mrs K Ford reported that her sister-in-law was willing to improve the Council's website in line with the mock up she had sent to Councillors DF Holman, Mrs JM Young and the Clerk, at no cost to the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the kind offer to improve the Council's website, for free, be taken up so long as the domain name is not affected and that CWAC Council is able to continue hosting it once the improvements have been made.

161. VERNON INSTITUTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (VICM)

Councillor Mrs JM Young reported that the Vernon Institute Management Committee's last meeting had centred on developments and refurbishment of the Vernon Institute. She also informed that the VICM intended to amend its constitution at its Annual General Meeting in October 2011 to try to make it easier to access external funding.

It was noted that the response to the VICM's recent village survey had been very low but an analysis had been carried out.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

162. ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

(a) The Council noted the following outside body meetings coming up and agree representation where required

- Cheshire Association Of Local Council's Annual Meeting 2011 – Middlewich Town Hall On Thursday, 20 October 2011 – 6:30 – 9pm
Councillors WI Humphrey, A Warrington and Mrs JM Young to attend and the Clerk to be requested to submit the following Notice of Motion:

This Council calls on the Cheshire Association of Local Councils to support all Parish Councils in Cheshire in the protection of the Green Belt.

- Cheshire Association of Local Councils' Chester Area Meeting on Wednesday, 21 September 2011 – 7:30pm at HQ, Chester
Councillor Mrs JM Young to attend.

(b) The Council received reports from Members on proceedings at outside meetings attended as follows:

- NALC's Communities in Action – Conference and Exhibition in Sheffield on Tuesday, 19 July 2011.
Councillors B Kerr and D Holman reported that this Conference had been very disappointing. They had covered most of the organised sessions between them but it had been lacklustre event.
- Cheshire Voluntary Action's "Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers" Workshop, Thursday 14 July 2011 at the Uniformed Groups' Headquarters from 6.00pm to 7.30pm.

Councillors RA Storrar and A Warrington reported that they had not been inspired to become members and work within the community. The event had covered health and safety issues and ensuring appropriate equipment was used for any voluntary work carried out e.g. litter picking.

163. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED

To following communications had been received:

- Letter dated 8 August 2011 from Cheshire West and Chester Council's Electoral Services Team Leader dated 8 August 2011 regarding the 2011 – Polling Districts and Polling Station Review
Proposals for changes to boundaries/suggestions to use alternative premises as Polling Stations are invited.

The Council was happy for the Vernon Institute to continue to be used as a polling station.

- Email dated 24 August 2011 from Mr J Fletcher regarding two matters

These matters had now been dealt with.

- Letter dated 26 August 2011 from Mrs J Johnson informing that her land, next to the Golden Jubilee Park, is not for sale at the current time.

164. CIRCULARS

The Clerk reported that no circulars had been received

165. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

166. GREEN BELT LAND

Further to Minute No. 148/2011 the Council considered in detail what action to take to protect Green Belt land.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) this matter be referred for discussion to the next meeting of the Finance and Business Development Committee on 10 October 2011; and
- (2) the Clerk be requested to contact the Parish Clerks of Puddington and District, Mollington, Lea by Backford and Capenhurst Parish Councils to see if they are interested in meeting to discuss how to protect Green Belt land.