

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE held on 29 February 2012 in the Uniform Groups' Headquarters, Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor Mrs K Ford  
Councillor DF Holman (in the Chair)  
Councillor B Kerr  
Councillor RK Shukla  
Councillor Mrs JM Young

1. APOLOGIES FOR AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Apologies for authorised absence were received from Councillors A Warrington and P Young and from Mr B Salisbury, the Internal Auditor.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor DF Holman declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No. 8 – Improving Communications – Social Networking as, before his retirement he was Head of the University of Chester's Informatics Centre. It would be recommended that the Informatics Centre carry out website improvement works for the Council. (Minute No. 8 (a) refers.)

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 December 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

4. ACCOUNTS

(a) Payments made since the meeting of the Committee held on 6 December 2011:

RESOLVED:

That the following payments be approved:

<u>Financial Year 2011/2012</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Cheque No</u>
Mr R Hipkiss (Litter Picking)	541.67	102574
Mrs S Hudspeth (Expenses)	89.67	102575
Mrs S Hudspeth (Salary)	486.00	102526
Wirral Council (Printing and Postage)	259.54	102527
Mrs JE Storrar (Travelling Expenses) (Honoraria for the three ladies who run the library)	11.00	102528
Mr R Hipkiss (Litter Picking)	541.67	102529
HM Revenue and Customs	1238.25	102530
Mrs S Hudspeth (Expenses)	36.00	102531
Mrs S Hudspeth (Salary)	486.00	102532
University of Chester (Newsletter Printing)	288.70	102533
Saughall Uniform Groups (Newsletter Distribution)	20.00	102534

<u>Financial Year 2011/2012</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Cheque No</u>
NWN Media Ltd (Newsletter Distribution with Standard)	39.19	102535
Informatics Centre, University of Chester (Deposit for Website Works (Minute No. 8 (a) refers.)	750.00	102536

(b) Receipts

VAT repayment £2,297.92.

(c) Cash to Bank Reconciliation

RESOLVED:

That the contents be noted.

(d) Honoraria

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the names and addresses of those volunteers who help in the Library and wind the Vernon Institute clock be provided for the Clerk;
- (2) those at (1) above be each given an amount of £30 at Christmas as a token of the Council's appreciation for the work they carry out for the benefit of the local community; and
- (3) the names of those who help in the Library and wind the Vernon Institute be included in the Parish Council Newsletter in future.

5. THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

(a) Localism Act 2011 (Commencement No. 3) Order 2012 – Power of General Competence

It was reported that these regulations had been brought forward to counter the recent decision to ban prayers at council meetings.

The key interest for parish councils was that the Regulations brought into effect most of Section 1 Localism Act 2011 (powers of general competence) that gave the power to 'eligible parish councils' to do whatever any individual could do to local authorities.

However, the qualifying features that would determine which parish councils would be able to have the powers of general competence had still to be set. A separate order was needed to apply the power to parishes. This has been laid before Parliament but it could not come into force for 40 days because of the procedure it was subject to - in the Localism Act. That would take it beyond 1 April 2012 which had been when the power was originally planned to come into force.

Even when the separate order did come into force there were three criteria that would have to apply to a parish council before the general power could apply to

it. At least three quarters of the parish councillors had to be in post (parish councils could quite often have empty seats); its clerk had to hold one of a list of four qualifications, and have had training as set out by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

(b) New Standards Regime

The intention had been that the part of the Act dealing with the standards arrangements was to have been in force by April 2012 but the Department for Communities and Local Government had indicated that this would be delayed to 1 July 2012. Standards for England had ceased to regulate Members' standards from 31 January 2012.

The new regime for upholding standards of conduct by local authority Members was in place but not yet in full force. It represented a compromise between localism and centralism. Local authorities could not decide whether to enforce standards of conduct; they must do so. However, apart from certain minimum standards, local authorities could decide what standards to set. Enforcement would be polarised: central state intervention would be through the criminal law. Enforcement would otherwise be by local authorities themselves. There would be no other civil enforcement machinery, except for the possibility of judicial review.

All Local Authorities would be required to adopt a code of conduct which was consistent with the seven principles of public life introduced by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life. There would no longer be a statutory model code which must be adopted. A parish council may adopt the code adopted by its principal authority if it so wished. Cheshire West and Chester Council was required to have arrangements in place to receive and, where appropriate, investigate allegations that its Members or the Town and Parish Councils in the borough had failed to comply with their code of conduct.

The Act required Monitoring Officers of relevant Authorities to establish and maintain a Register of Members' and co-opted Members' Interests, to make the register available for inspection and to publish it on the Authority's website. It also required the Monitoring Officer to make the Register of Members' Interests for Town and Parish Councils in its area available for inspection and to publish it on the Principal Council's website. Town and Parish Councils were also required to publish the register on their own website, if they had one.

RESOLVED:

That the two reports be noted.

6. PARISH COUNCIL'S BUSINESS PLAN – ACTION LIST

RESOLVED:

That the Action Plan drawn up by the Clerk and the Business Planning Group be agreed and **RECOMMENDED** to the Council for adoption at its Annual Meeting in May 2012.

## 7. GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK – LITTER PICKING ARRANGEMENTS

Councillors B Kerr and Mrs JM Young reported that they had met with Mollington Parish Council's Litter Picker, Jeff Davies. Mr Davies had indicated that he was willing to carry out 3 hours a week of litter picking to keep the Golden Jubilee Park tidy from 1 April 2012.

It was noted that Mr R Hipkiss' current litter picking contract would end on 31 March 2012.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Clerk be requested to write to Mr Davies confirming the arrangement for him to carry out litter picking in the Golden Jubilee Park for three hours a week as discussed with Councillors B Kerr and Mrs JM Young; and
- (2) the Clerk be requested to write to Mr R Hipkiss thanking him for the litter picking he has undertaken for the Council and confirming that his contract ends on 31 March 2012.

## 8. IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS – SOCIAL NETWORKING

### (a) Website Improvements

Councillor DF Holman reported that the University of Chester's Informatics Centre was willing and able to carry out the website development work that the Council required. Its staff could design and implement a website, including a rolling news item on the first page, photograph albums and the problem form. It would be very visual and easy to update and training would be provided. Staff in the Informatics Centre would liaise with the appropriate staff at Cheshire West and Chester Council, who hosted the Parish Council's website. The cost would be £1,250. If the work was commissioned from the University a deposit, in advance, was requested.

### (b) Vertical Display Board

Councillor DF Holman also informed that the Informatics Centre was also willing and able to undertake the Vertical Display Board project at a cost of £203.

RESOLVED:

That the work required at both (a) and (b) above be commissioned from the University of Chester's Informatics Centre at the costs set out above, a deposit of £750 be paid up front and the rest will be due once the work has been delivered.

## 9. EXTERNAL FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Councillor Mrs K Ford read out the following statement:

“What is a Community Investment Champion?

A Community Investment Champion is a business or individual who invests their time or invests financially in the village of Saughall. With the increase this year of the council tax, it is very important that the Parish Council seeks out as many ways to ensure village costs are kept low, by seeking outside or external investment for projects it will ensure that the village will get a injection of funding to kick start these projects.

There are several very large scale projects coming up in the village e.g. improvements to the Vernon Institute, a Sports Pavilion, however we do have a lot of smaller projects who's costs add up to a considerable amount of tax payers money.

At the beginning I said a Community Investment Champion could invest financially or with time. I will start with financially and will explain how this could work.

Using the Parish Council Business Plan as a support document, this could be sent out to potential investors with a current list of jobs/projects, with relevant costs, that are required in the village, investors can select a project that they would like to be involved in.

What would be the benefit for the business investor?

Advertising can be expensive, what we could offer, as a village, is advertisement space on Parish Council owned bus stops, the playing fields, parish notice boards, a double page space on our quarterly newsletter and the Parish Council website.

Our village supports 2,000+ electorate and this does not include people using the village facilities from outside Saughall and persons under the voting age. To any business this could be 2,000+ potential new customers, they would be part of helping a village to grow at grass roots level, being able to say to potential customers that "We care and we are committing to the investment of the future of Chester"

We have Businesses that we use now and ones that we plan to use in the future. They could be asked for a reduction in value for quotes for work in exchange for advertising space in the village.

We have the former Ridings Infant School site on which Morris Homes plan to build a residential development. As a Parish Council we should be sitting down with Morris Homes now and discussing our plans for attracting investors and requesting that, as part of their budget, that they invest in the village of Saughall as Saughall residents are the ones that are going to be disrupted by the development. Why should Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC) benefit

financially from this scheme when they have left residents of Saughall looking at an empty site for so long?

This could also apply to the affordable housing scheme on Lodge lane, what and how will Saughall residents benefit from this?

A Community Investment Champion is not just about investing money. People's time sometimes has a greater value than money. To change something it should start from within.

In Saughall and near by areas we are very lucky to have a broad range of people with exceptional talents. We have artists, business men and woman managing very successful companies, teachers etc.

If people gave an hour or two a month to bring a new skill into the village or to support an existing group many people would benefit e.g. an artist could share some of their skills to a monthly group, a business owner could run mock interview evening, and a teacher could run a Maths or English evening. By pledging an hour or two a month they could potentially unlock a hidden talent, give someone the confidence to go for an interview that they were dreading or brush up on reading or writing skills.

These people would be investing in the inner improvement of our village and would be true Champions. The Parish Council could hold a "Time sheet" from groups that need support and persons that could offer their time. The Parish Council could then match up persons, giving time to the relevant groups.

Where do we go from here?

We should be asking the leader of CWaC for his support in launching the scheme as more businesses and individuals are more likely to invest in the village if the scheme is supported by CWaC. CWaC also has the facilities within the Council to bring in support to improve the village.

A Committee would need to be set up to ensure strict governance of the scheme and to ensure any advertising is age appropriate and not offensive, to agree advertising packages and terms and conditions.

The committee would send out the proposal to businesses and business groups across Chester e.g. Chester Business Group, Chester Chamber of Commerce, the Business Network and the Curry Club.

Once a year all the investors should be welcomed to an awards ceremony to highlight their investment in the village and to award a "Community Investment Champion of the Year" award.

We have several village events planned for this year which we can open up for "Bid" Days. These would be days when we are holding village events/fetes/etc. This will be a day that a company or business could bid for the chance of exclusive rights to advertise in the village on that day. We have the Chester half marathon on 13 May. We as a village are also holding celebrations for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee on 3 June. This event could also be a "Bid" Day.

Representatives of village groups should be encouraged to join the Committee so we can have a wider idea of village needs or ideas.”

Members discussed Councillor Mrs K Ford’s Community Investment Champions initiative in detail and agreed that some good ideas had been generated. It was proposed that a clearly defined project e.g. the Council’s proposal to provide a Sports Pavilion in the Golden Jubilee Park could be the vehicle in which to involve businesses. It was noted that if the Council obtained the power of general competence it could take this Community Investment Champions initiative forward.

RESOLVED:

That a decision on the Community Investment Champions initiative be deferred to the next meeting of the Council scheduled for Monday, 5 March 2012.

10. COMPETITION – PROJECTS TO CELEBRATE THE QUEEN’S DIAMOND JUBILEE

The competition had been advertised in the February 2012 Parish Council Newsletter. Community Groups had been invited to submit their project ideas by 31 March 2012. It was expected that more publicity would be required and Members agreed to promote this initiative by attending the meetings of the various organised Groups in the village, to tell them about it and encourage them to put projects forward.

RESOLVED:

That the competition, the Council is running, encouraging villagers to bid for funding for community projects to commemorate the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, be promoted by all Members of the Council and as many entrants as possible be encouraged to take part.

11. FUTURE PROJECTS/IDEAS

The Committee was requested to:

- (a) keep the Council’s future priorities that fell within its remit, as listed below, under review;
- (b) identify any new priorities; and
- (c) take any action considered appropriate.

- **Tarmac path beside the Uniform Groups’ Headquarters**  
To consider any quotations for the work required that have been received.
- **Fundraising for Community Projects**  
A Panel to oversee this fundraising initiative is to be established.

- **Community Action Projects (CAP)**
  - (a) A Participatory Budget Scheme (as a pump primer) was to be drawn up to launch the CAP. No provision was specifically made in the Council's 2012/13 Budget for this purpose.
  - (b) To seek alternative funding sources and prepare funding applications to exploit external funding opportunities that may arise e.g. proposed Community Investment Champions initiative.
  - (c) There was £2000 in the Council's 2012/13 Budget for Community Action Projects.
  - (d) An advert was placed in the February 2012 edition of the Parish Newsletter inviting interested organised groups in the village to make proposals on how it would spend up to £500 max on a project, which must benefit the local community, to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. A Panel will be established to judge any entries in this competition. (Item No. 10 on the agenda.)
  - (e) To discuss the arrangements for the proposed Social Evening when the funding will be distributed to the successful applicants. This is to be considered at a Special meeting of the Committee on Monday, 12 March 2012.
  
- **Community Action Projects (CAP) Team**

The Council wants to establish, build and motivate a winning CAP Team to engage partners and work within an agreed remit, to successfully shape its community by driving forward social enterprises and to administer the CAP Fund that will be used to assist and match fund worthwhile projects and initiatives.
  
- **Golden Jubilee Park**
  - (a) Possible Land Purchase
    - The land in question is not for sale at the present time.
  - (b) Proposed Sports Pavilion
    - Members visited Neston Cricket Club at Parkgate on 28 November 2011.
  - (c) Skate Park/Folding Ramp
  
- **The Queen's Diamond Jubilee**

The Council has put £2000 a side out of its contingencies to help support the planned community event, "Picnic in the Park" on Monday, 4 June 2012 in the Golden Jubilee Park, being organised to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's current list of Future Projects/Ideas along with the Actions agreed and progress being made as set out above be noted and further reviewed at the next meeting.



12. SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That a Special meeting of the Committee be held to consider quotations received for goods and works the Council requires and to agree arrangements and format of the Annual Parish Assembly scheduled for the evening of Monday, 30 April 2012 at the Vernon Institute.