

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on 1 August 2011 at the Vernon Institute, Church Road, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor WI Humphrey (Homewatch Chairman)
Councillor Mrs J Johnson
Councillor Mrs J Knox
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor A Warrington
Councillor Mrs JM Young (in the Chair)

Cheshire West and Chester Councillor Brian Crowe

Also in attendance: Councillor RK Shukla
Councillor RA Storrar

18. APOLOGIES FOR AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Apologies for authorised absence were received from Councillor B Kerr. PCSO Wendy Leason was unable to attend.

19. CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

20. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

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

21. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That the Membership of the Committee be noted as follows:

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

22. POLICE/HOMEWATCH

(a) Police

PCSO Wendy Leason had sent the Clerk a written report setting out details of crimes and anti-social behaviour which had occurred in the village during July 2011. There had been one report of anti-social behaviour. A motor bike had been heard in the woods on Lodge Lane. There had been two reports of criminal damage. A vehicle had been damaged on Timberfields by chemicals being thrown over its paint work and tyres had been slashed on a vehicle parked on Hermitage Road. In both cases the vehicles had been targeted as the result of a dispute.

There had been three reports of theft of metal in the local area. A gas fire had been taken from outside a property in Rosewood Grove. There had been an attempted theft of metal in Shotwick Village and copper had been stolen from unoccupied premises in Puddington.

A number of issues had been raised with the Police involving nuisance youth behaviour around the Uniform Groups' Headquarters in the Golden Jubilee Park. Youths had removed the netting from the cricket apparatus. Also, youths had trespassed onto the site of the former Ridings Infant School. Local youths had been spoken to by the Police as a result.

No issues of concern had been raised at the Police Surgery held during the Farmers' Market.

PCSO Leason reported that Chester, as a whole, was suffering from an increase in the theft of scrap metal from properties and Members were asked to be mindful of any suspicious vehicles especially flatbed trucks and vans and people going onto driveways.

PCSO Leason and the Beat Officer, PC Rhys Matthews were supporting the Summer Play Scheme, being run currently, by the Saughall Neighbourhood Management Team and were attending daily to engage with the youngsters who were in attendance.

RESOLVED:

That PCSO Leason be thanked for her informative report.

(b) Homewatch

Councillor WI Humphrey, in his capacity as Homewatch Chairman, presented an oral report detailing low level crime and anti-social activity that had taken place over the last few weeks in the village. This included:

- a visit to the Youth Club following complaints from the caretaker;
- the Guides being harassed in the Uniform Groups' Headquarters by persons tampering with the door clasp;
- youths playing football on the grassed amenity area in Darlington Crescent. Chester and District Housing Trust had informed that they did not put up 'No Ball Games' signs because it could not enforce it;
- youths causing damage to the seat and bin adjacent to the Uniform Groups' Headquarters;
- rubbish left in the swing park and behind the Uniformed Groups' Headquarters;
- youths causing a nuisance on the roof of the Uniform Groups' Headquarters after 10pm; and
- children, as young as eight years old, throwing stones at the Boot Camp ladies as they exercised on the field.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Humphrey be thanked for his informative presentation.

(c) Saughall Neighbourhood Management Committee

Councillor Mrs JM Young reported that the Neighbourhood Management Team was in the process of running its two weeks Summer Play Scheme. The following activities had been organised:

- Dr Bike attending to advise on minor repairs and talk about bikes in general;
- a professional Golfer attending on two occasions;
- cricket lessons from members of Chester Cricket Club; and
- outings to West Kirby and Ellesmere Port Boat Museum.

It was also reported that there had been an offer of funding to assist next year's Summer Play Scheme and the detail of this would be reported to a future meeting.

Councillor Mrs JM Young informed that she had asked the Neighbourhood Management Team to re-design the play area, as a special project, so that if external funding became available in future, a proposal would be ready for inclusion within the grant application.

RESOLVED:

That the Neighbourhood Management Team's report be received.

23. GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK

- (a) Reference from the Council Meeting held on 4 July 2011 referred to this Committee as follows:

Public Speaking Time

Prior to the commencement of the meeting Steve Richardson, Chair of Saughall Colts Junior Football Team informed the Council of the Club's expansion and its requirement, as a result, for an additional sports pitch to play on, from next season. Seven teams had played last season but the Colts hoped to play nine teams next season. It was noted that there were approximately one hundred children in the Club and they were predominantly from the village.

Mr Richardson formally requested permission to play on the pitch in the Golden Jubilee Park. However, he was unsure of the dimensions of the pitch required and agreed to let the Council have the exact measurements as soon as possible. He also agreed to hold discussions with Brian Huxley about the requirements of the Cricket Club and the Colts to ascertain how they both could be accommodated. It was noted that any agreement would involve revisions to the Golden Jubilee Park's Joint Use Agreement and a monetary contribution towards grounds maintenance.

The Colts' request and associated issues were referred to the General Purposes Committee for consideration at its next meeting on 1 August 2011.

Councillor Mrs J M Young reported that representatives from the Colts' had now met with representatives from the Cricket Club and agreed use terms and

arrangements in relation to the sports pitches and where ready to sign a revised Joint Use Agreement in respect of the Golden Jubilee Park.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be received; and

(2) the Clerk be requested to draw up a new Joint Use Agreement ready for the signatures of representatives of the three parties concerned.

(b) Field Committee

It was reported that the Field Committee had not met. However, it was noted that there had been further mole activity in the swing park and a quote to address this in the some of £80 had been obtained and accepted from Messy Moles. There still appeared to be some mole activity and a Messy Moles representative was coming out to deal with it.

Not all of the Cheshire Railings had been painted by Community Pay Back volunteers and it was uncertain whether the Council would be able to enjoy their services again so two quotations had been obtained to finish the work required (scrape, prime and apply two coats of rustoleum) as follows:

Sam Whitfield in the sum of £220
Barry Morris in the sum of £300

The Council had already purchased the necessary materials.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be received; and

(2) the quotation from Sam Whitfield in the sum of £220 be accepted and he be asked to complete the necessary work as soon as possible.

(c) Ponds

It was noted that the water level of the new pond was very low.

(d) Perimeter Path

The perimeter path was shrinking and work was required to address this. Quotations had been obtained for what was required but they were very high. Therefore, the work could only be commissioned if external funding could be obtained to assist it.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

(e) Car Park Drainage

The Committee was informed that Councillor Mrs K Ford's husband had looked into the options available to address the car park's drainage problem. These had been written up and were on a pen drive which was handed to the Clerk at the meeting. She would let Members have a copy of what it contained.

RESOLVED:

That the options for car park drainage work be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

(f) Safety Surface Replacement

It was reported that there were no problems being experienced with the safety surfaces so this matter need not be included on future agendas.

(g) Aerial Runway

The aerial runway's support legs had been examined by Members who could find nothing wrong with them.

It was noted that the runway was now a lot lower than it used to be and was not as much fun for the older children.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be received; and

(2) the Clerk be requested to contact Massey and Harris and ask them to tighten up the zip wire on the aerial runway.

(h) Bin for Park

Cheshire West and Chester Councillor Brian Crowe was asked if he would be able to help by providing a bin to be located in the Park as youths had recently destroyed one by setting it on fire. Councillor Crowe agreed to see what he could do

24. PRESENTATION ON CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL'S PROPOSALS REGARDING GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE PROVISION

Councillor Brian Crowe reminded the Committee that concerns about possible Gypsies and Travellers permanent site provision at Oakwood Farm had been raised the previous year in October when neighbouring parish councils had written collectively to the leader of the Principal Authority, Cheshire West and Chester Councillor, Mike Jones and to its Chief Executive, Steve Robinson. Councillor Crowe reported that he was aware that his Council's Estates Department had turned down a number of low offers for Oakwood Farm.

Cheshire West and Chester Council, was obliged to assess the need for sites and plan for their provision. Unfortunately, it had done the assessment but failed to

make any provision whatsoever and this was the main reason that Gypsy and Traveller site developers were able to get planning permission at appeal. Councillor Crowe reported that he had been told that his Council was now close to doing this. Seven sites in Chester were being considered and the Strategic Planning Board would choose three of these and make an announcement by the end of this year. Only by illustrating adequate provision would it be able to defend unauthorised encampments in the green belt and elsewhere.

RESOLVED:

That the situation regarding Gypsy and Traveller sites be noted.

25. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPOSALS FOR LAND AT LODGE LANE

It was reported that the planning application for 18 affordable units at Lodge Lane had been submitted to Cheshire West and Chester Council, the Planning Authority on Monday, 11 July 2011.

At the last Working Group meeting, regarding the design, Members had asked whether Chester and District Housing Trust would be able to step some of the units. The architect had reviewed the request and had advised the following:

“In light of the comments raised at the last design meeting we would like to take the opportunity to outline our design rationale, as follows. The proposed layout delivers series of semi-detached and terraced dwellings which reflect and respond to the massing of the existing dwellings immediately adjacent to the site. Originally the requirements to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes level 6* resulted in the dwellings with a strict north/south orientation. The review and subsequent relaxation of the Code Level required has allowed for more flexibility in the dwelling orientation/site layout.

By turning a number of dwellings through 90 degrees it has been possible to provide a stronger and more active frontage addressing the main vehicular and pedestrian route which runs through the centre of the layout (previously this was a series of gables) as well as allowing a number of the new dwellings to overlook the open space in the centre and to the south of the site.

The site has a number of constraints particularly along its northern/north western boundary – these include the configuration of the site itself (it is at its narrowest); the need to retain the existing tree belt (adjacent to the site); the need to provide a strong frontage onto Lodge Lane/create a gateway into the site and provide a suitable access point which is of sufficient distance from the existing junctions and does not impede on existing driveways. The alignment of this new road also needs to allow for possible future development of the land south of the site.

Taking all this into account has resulted in the dwellings taking on a north/south, east/west orientation. For example if plots 4 and 5 were rotated so as their frontage ran parallel with the road then the privacy between plots 3 and 4 would be compromised. Plot 4 would have to be relocated further south which would impact of the mature oak and would result in a weaker site entrance.

The remaining plots 6 -18 are parallel to the road and we have stepped the blocks in and out – similar to plots 2 and 28 Park Way for example, to create a varying building line. By stepping the blocks some of the on plot car parking is screened in part (plots 9 and 10, 14 -16) and we are able to create a courtyard serving plots 11 - 16 which overlooks the field to the south.

The blocks themselves have a strong, simple building line which reflects the surrounding built form. In light of the comments raised at the last meeting we have reviewed stepping individual units within these blocks and offer the following response.

Staggering semi-detached dwellings (plots 4, 5 and 17, 18) compromises the elevations which we feel would detract from the street scene. To step back plot 18 would impact on its garden depth and proximity to the tree root protection areas.

Plots 12, 13 and 14 - 16 are staggered as blocks and define the court and entrance into it – to add a further step would only appear to over-complicate the design.

The bungalows have an L-shaped footprint which creates a series of ‘in and outs’ where they are paired or terraced. We question the need to add a further step (plots 6-8) which would impact on the open space in the centre of the site (which we are looking to maximise).

To summarise we feel that due to the nature of the site constraints and the ‘limited’ number of dwellings (in terms that we do not have long runs of terraces) it makes good design sense to keep the building line as simple as possible to reinforce the open space and public realm within the site. This is also reflective of the surrounding built form.

We attach a copy of the landscape proposals for the site which have now been added to the layout. The informal planting and swathes of bulb planting have been design to create a soft setting for the new homes.”

It was reported that Lesley Bassett of Cheshire West and Chester Council had also been looking into the footpath request from the rear of the site through to Park Way and would provide a response on this separately.

In respect of scheme delivery, the Working Group had queried how it would be funded. The scheme had been included within the Trust’s recent bid to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for the next Capital Funding round 2011 - 2015. It was anticipated that a response from the HCA on the level of grant available for new build schemes would be forthcoming within the next few weeks. It was already known that the availability of grant would be significantly reduced from previous levels; the Trust’s Board had undertaken a review of how it could continue to support the development of new build properties. The Board and the Resident Board had approved the sale of a very small number of the Housing Trust’s properties in order that the money could be reinvested into new affordable homes. Number 67 Church Road, Saughall, had recently become vacant and had been identified as a property that, if sold, could be reinvested into the new 18 homes at Lodge Lane. The property would shortly be marketed through local estate agents

Cavendish Ikin for a price in the region of £155,000. The Housing Trust hoped that the Parish Council considered the sale of one older property with increasing maintenance costs would support the delivery on new homes and allow more people to access affordable properties in the village.

The Housing Trust had thanked Members of the Working Group for their time and contribution toward the final plans for Lodge Lane and hoped that on securing a successful planning permission it could continue to work with them throughout delivery.

RESOLVED:

That the current position with regard to the proposed affordable housing scheme on Lodge Lane be noted.

26. THE REDEVELOPMENT OF WAIN HOUSE

The Clerk had been sent a copy of the Trust HomeChoice publication which included an advert for the new properties at Wain Court. It was reported that Chester and District Housing Trust had agreed that Parish Councillors would be invited to view Wain Court when it was completed (handover had been delayed to the end of August 2011). It was noted that the Housing Trust allocated new builds prior to the building being complete to ensure a swift process from when the building was handed over to the Housing Trust, to the tenant moving in.

The Clerk had asked if the Parish Council could be involved in the allocations process and been told that, the Housing Trust operated a 'meet and greet' scheme for new developments and would be pleased to invite Members to join this. It usually involved a small coffee morning whereby existing residents could meet potential new residents, prior to allocation. Following the 'meet and greet' each potential applicant would be interviewed by a Housing Trust Officer. Unfortunately, Members of the Parish Council could not be involved in this part of the allocations process due to data protection rules.

It was reported that Saughall had been classified as rural in terms of the allocation policy and as such preference would be given to residents with a connection to the area, for example an applicant in Band B with a connection to Saughall would be placed in Band A.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

27. ALL SAINTS PRIMARY SCHOOL – COMMUNITY USE

The Clerk had written to the Chair of the Governors at All Saints Primary School, Paul Jenkins on 6 July 2001 asking what his thoughts were in respect of making the school building available for community use. The Clerk had written to the previous Chair twice on this matter. She had received no responses at all.

RESOLVED:

That the lack of progress in getting the School to engage with the Clerk be noted.

28. CO-OP STORE – FACILITY NEEDED TO PAY ENGLISH WATER RATES

The Clerk had written three times to the Co-op's Head Office in Manchester requesting the facility to pay English Water Rates in the Co-op Store in Saughall. There had been no reply at all. The Council at its meeting on 4 July 2011 had referred this matter to this Committee for consideration and to note any progress.

RESOLVED:

That as the Co-op's Head Office had continually failed to respond to the Clerk's letters, this item of business be removed from future agendas.

29. HIGHWAY ISSUES

(a) Parked Cars on Pavements

Cars continued to park on pavements causing obstructions. This problem would be included on a list being prepared for Cheshire West and Chester Councillor Brian Crowe, in the hope that he may be able to help address it.

(b) Bus Shelter on Parkgate Road – Roof Repairs

It had proved very difficult to find anyone willing to provide a quotation for the work required on the bus shelters roof. The Committee considered the only one that had been received, noting it was from Jeff Harris in the sum of £345 plus VAT.

RESOLVED:

In the light of the difficulties of getting quotations for the work required on the bus shelter's roof and the time that had elapsed consequently, the only quotation from Jeff Harris in the sum of £345 plus VAT be accepted and Mr Harris be requested to carry out the necessary work as soon as possible.

(c) Kingswood Lane – Proposed Traffic Prevention Order

There were still problems being experienced on Kingswood Lane because people continued to drive along it in four wheel drive vehicles. However, as the ground was relatively dry at this time of year, there was not a great deal of mess.

(d) Location of Grit Bins

The Council had informed Cheshire West and Chester Council where it wanted grit bins sited in the village. Councillor RA Storrar recommended that the Council insist on proper plastic bins as grit would kill plants and rot metal.

(e) Twenty's Plenty

It was reported that the Twenty's Plenty trial in Hoole had been completed but the data collected had not been analysed!

(f) Manhole Cover at the Edgerton Arms

The problem had been dealt with.

(g) Hermitage Road, Hedge

The roadside hedge from the Ridings to the Peg was very overgrown and pedestrians were unable to use the path safely. It was noted that the birds were still nesting but that this would be regarded as an exception as the hedge was creating a danger for those who had to use it.

RESOLVED:

That the land owner concerned be requested to cut his hedge back so the path can be used safely.

30. YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Councillor WI Humphrey reported that the Youth Club was opening on Tuesday evenings during the school holidays. Connexions were making two more members of staff available to assist.

The outside of the Youth Club building, including the windows would be painted during the next two weeks. The cost of this work would be met from the Club's own funds.

Councillor WI Humphrey also outlined a proposal to run a tuck shop at the Uniform Groups' Headquarters during the early evening and at weekends. He would be championing this initiative himself but if there was any trouble at all he would not continue with it. Members offered their help and support with this initiative.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

31. LITTER PICKING

The Committee had concerns over the de-littering arrangements for the Golden Jubilee Park. Councillor Mrs JM Young undertook to discuss this matter with Councillor B Kerr to see if a way forward could be found.

32. LOCATION OF DOG FOULING BINS

The Clerk agreed to establish exactly what had been agreed by Councillors WI Humphrey and A Warrington when they had held a site meeting with Cheshire West and Chester Council's Streetscene Officer, Karl Siteine and let Cheshire West and Chester Councillor Brian Crowe know so he could progress chase, if it became necessary.

33. CHESHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCIL'S ANNUAL MEETING 2011 – MIDDLEWICH TOWN HALL ON THURSDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2011 – 6:30 – 9PM

RESOLVED:

That Councillors WI Humphrey and Mrs JM Young be requested to represent the Council at this event.

34. FUTURE PRIORITIES

The Committee reviewed its current projects and priorities as follows noting any progress made:

- **A Sports Pavilion in the Golden Jubilee Park**

As this would be a very large capital project for the Council to undertake it may determine that the new building would reflect a modern, forward thinking community, and that it would be as 'green' as possible within an agreed budget, to benefit the environment and reduce future running costs. The new building could be open to all users of the Golden Jubilee Park and regarded as a community facility.

The Council must formulate external funding applications to help meet the costs of any new build, and was fortunate to have the support of Saughall Cricket Club, which may also attract grant aid to contribute to the building costs. The aim may be, subject to external funding being available, to have a new sports pavilion in use by 2016.

- **A New Parish Plan**

Before work could begin to replace the Council's existing Parish Plan which was drawn up with the assistance of the Cheshire Community Council and part financed with a match funded grant for £2,500 from the Countryside Agency's 'Vital Villages Programme' and published in 2004, it may be wise to see what the enacted Localism Bill said in respect of Neighbourhood/Community and Parish Plans.

Survey work would be carried out as well as consultative meetings held before the new Plan was drafted and launched.

- **Woodland Trust – Free Trees**

It was reported that the Woodland Trust had packs of trees to give away. The Tree Warden had been requested to choose the trees and where to plant them in the village.

- **Community Events**

The Council was keen to support and help facilitate events such as:

- The Queen's Diamond Jubilee – Referred from Council meeting on 9 May 2011. (Minute No. 123/2011 refers) – No progress had been made on this yet but it looked as though the Council would be leading on it.
- Remembrance Sundays – arrangements had been made for Sunday, 13 November 2011 and the Clerk had ordered a poppy wreath for the Chairman to lie at the war memorial.
- Village Sports Days
- Christmas Lights Switch on – would be on Thursday, 1 December 2011.

- **War Memorial/Cenotaph**

The Council has agreed to add the names of two soldiers who fell during the Great War and who are buried in Saughall to the Roll of Honour, however there may be a third name to add and this could not be confirmed at present as the gravestone in question had fallen over so the detail could not be seen. Therefore, it was agreed that no action would be taken on this just yet.

It was reported that Councillor B Kerr had asked the Committee to consider proceeding to install a new plaque at the Vernon Institute to commemorate those servicemen who had died during the First World War and were buried in War Commission graves located in Saughall cemeteries. Members agreed to seek clarity on this.