

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on 5 December 2011 at the Vernon Institute, Church Road, Saughall

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

Cheshire West and Chester Councillor Brian Crowe

Also in attendance: Councillor RA Storrar

54. APOLOGIES FOR AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Apologies for authorised absence were received from Councillors B Kerr, Mrs J Johnson, Cheshire West and Chester Councillor B Crowe and PCSO Wendy Leason (Rest Day) who were unable to attend.

55. CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

56. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 October 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

57. PARISH COUNCIL'S SURGERY

Councillor A Warrington reported that Parishioners who had attended the Parish Surgery which he had presided over on 3 December 2012 had asked what the plans were for the former Ridings Infant School site. It was generally known that Cheshire West and Chester Council, in whose ownership the site was, had requested bids by the end of March 2011.

Parishioners had also raised concerns over Cheshire West and Chester Council's proposal to develop Green Belt land at Oakwood Farm as a transit site for Gypsies and Travellers. The general view was that Green Belt land must be protected and they were pleased that the Principal Authority had been forced to drop this proposal because of the discovery of several protected species of bat living on the site.

Councillor A Warrington informed the Committee that he intended to contact Cheshire West and Chester Council's Streetscene Officer, Karl Siteine with a view to obtaining the dog fouling notices he had been promised by him at the site visit earlier in the year.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received; and
- (2) the Clerk be requested to write to Steve Robinson, Chief Executive of Cheshire West and Chester Council for a progress report on the former Ridings Infant School site.

{Following the meeting Mr Robinson responded to the Clerk advising that a conditional contract had been agreed with Morris Homes, in which they were contractually obliged to submit a planning application for residential development by 2 March 2012. His Council had reserved a right to terminate the contract if an application was not submitted within this timescale. However, there were various extensions of time permitted within the contract, which in essence allowed them to submit a planning appeal application and deal with any outstanding conditions stipulated by planning, if forthcoming.}

58. POLICE/HOMEWATCH

(a) Police

PCSO Wendy Leason had submitted a written report setting out details of crimes and anti-social behaviour which had occurred in the village since the last Committee meeting as follows:

Burglaries:

During the Month of November there has been 4 Burglaries and 3 Burglary Others which has involved thefts from sheds and entry gained to the poly tunnel at Oaktree Nurseries. The good news was that a local male had been caught committing one of the burglaries and admitted to two other burglaries in the Village. He was arrested and was being dealt with. Youths had been arrested in connection with another of the burglaries in the village.

Another concern was the attempted burglary at the Co-op. Access had been achieved but nothing had been taken. Priority attention was now being given to the premises.

Anti-Social Behaviour:

There had been no incidents reported to the Police although PCSO Leason was aware that youths had been throwing items at passing buses and there had been issues at the Vernon Institute with youngsters attending the Youth Club.

Police Drop-in at Farmers' Market:

No Police Issues reported.

Councillor Mrs JM Young reported that PC Rhys Matthews and PCSO Wendy Leason had provided an excellent police presence during the Christmas Lights Switch-on Ceremony on Thursday, 1 December 2011. It had been well organised and co-ordinated.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) PCSO Wendy Leason be thanked for her informative report; and
- (2) PC Rhys Matthews and PCSO Wendy Leason be thanked for their excellent help during the Christmas Lights Switch-on Ceremony and be asked to put 4 June 2012 in their diaries so that they are on duty to help with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebration event to be held in the Golden Jubilee Park.

(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:

- the speed gun had been used on Hermitage Road;
- damage to lights at Wain Court, Chester and District Housing Trust had been informed;
- youths on the scaffolding at the Vernon Institute causing annoyance to those attending Slimming World;
- berries had been thrown at the Busy Bee Bus and at the Co-op Store, youths had been spoken to;
- wreaths desecrated at the War Memorial, the PCSO had been notified;
- theft of an ornamental dog from ground floor balcony at Wain Court, the PCSO had been notified;
- a suspicious scrap scam, the PCSO had been given all of the information;
- a parishioner at Aldersey House had reported an attempted burglary, the PCSO had been informed;
- a bogus stair lift operator calling at a house on Church Road.

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 had a healthy bank balance.

The Team had also provided assistance at the Christmas Lights Switch-on Ceremony on 1 December 2011, by monitoring the car parking facilities.

The Team had met on 29 November 2011 and had discussed holding a Driver's Engagement Day. If caught speeding they would be offered the choice of paying the fine or watching videos to educate them not to speed in the future. It had also agreed to hold its Summer Play Scheme towards the end of the Schools' Summer Holidays in 2012 so as not to clash with the Olympic Games.

It was also reported that the Quiz and Fish and Chip Supper event was sold out.

RESOLVED:

That the Neighbourhood Management Team's report be received.

59. THE QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS EVENT

Councillor Mrs JM Young reported on the proceedings of a meeting held on 15 November 2011 to organise the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations event scheduled for 4 June 2012, in the Golden Jubilee Park. She reported as follows:

- the Council had put aside £2,000 to assist this event;
- the public liability insurance in respect of the Golden Jubilee Park would need to be checked;
- advertising was being arranged;
- there were plans for a stage, beer tent and barbecue;
- local residents would be notified;
- an advert would be placed in the Saughall and Mollington Handbook in April and May 2012;
- flyers would be hand delivered;
- St John's Ambulance would be booked;
- toilets would be booked;
- a trailer with curtain sides was required;
- a changing tent and gazebos were required;
- quotes were being sought for a public address system and lights; and
- bands would be invited to the next meeting scheduled for 7:00pm on Monday, 16 January 2012 in the Uniformed Groups' Headquarters.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

60. HIGHWAY ISSUES

(a) Parked Cars on Pavements

This was still a problem and was being monitored by Members and the PCSO.

(b) Speeding Traffic and the Proposal for Saughall to be designated a Community Speed Watch Area

There was no progress to report on this initiative.

(c) Bus Stop opposite Aspen Grove and at the Egerton Arms on Hermitage Road

Cheshire West and Chester Council's Operations Manager– Infrastructure and Flexible Transport Services, Andy Nickson had informed that the landowner had not responded to his request to cut back the vegetation at the Egerton Arms bus stop. Therefore, he would make the arrangements for the necessary work to be carried out.

Mr Nickson also informed that Cheshire West and Chester Council was in a position to look at the Aspen Grove bus stop situation, following up on a site visit

he had conducted with Councillor Mrs JM Young and Tony Summers. His Council was upgrading some bus stops in the area and would upgrade Aspen Grove at the same time.

(d) Kingswood Lane – Proposed Traffic Prevention Order

There was no progress to report on this initiative.

(e) Hermitage Road Hedge

It was reported that the work required had been carried out.

(f) Twenty's Plenty

It was reported that the Twenty's Plenty trial in Hoole had been completed and the data collected was being analysed. The results from the analysed data were awaited.

(g) Obstructions causing danger to persons in Church Way

It was reported that the double yellow lines needed to be redone, where the road was recently dug up in Church Way. The area that required attention was between the old Thomas Wedge School and the Church, just off Church Road.

RESOLVED:

That this matter be referred to CWAC Council.

(h) Crofters Way – Moss

There was moss on the pavement as it was always in the shade. This had been reported to CWAC Council's Streetscene Team.

RESOLVED:

That this problem be brought to the attention of the Saughall Neighbourhood Management Committee.

61. GOLDEN JUBILEE PARK

(a) Joint Use Agreement

Councillor Mrs JM Young reported that the Joint Use Agreement had now been signed by all three parties.

(b) Field Committee Report in Response to the Quarterly Play Equipment Inspection Report

Following the receipt of the latest Quarterly Play Equipment Inspection Report from Morral Play Solutions Councillor WI Humphrey reported on a recent site visit attended by him and Councillors RA Storrar and A Warrington. The following proposals were put forward:

- three of the new sets, currently in storage, be used to replace the existing seating in the Park, this proposal only involved installation costs;
- consideration be given to purchasing some picnic tables to be located in the Park;
- Massey and Harris (Engineering) Ltd be requested to replace both the flat and cradle swing seats as they were worn;
- continually monitor the puncture holes in the wetpour by the Sputnik Roundabout;
- do not replace the goal post nets as they are a waste of money;
- ask Tony Summers to address the loose right support post on the Goal End with quick drying concrete as he has done previously and then replace the turf;
- the wetpour be cleaned to get rid of all moss and vegetation and all extremities be trimmed and tidied.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals put forward by the Field Committee be agreed.

(c) Ponds

Councillor RA Storrar reported that there was a lot of rubbish in the ponds. He advised that it be left, for now, and removed in the Spring.

RESOLVED:

That arrangements be made in the Spring to remove the rubbish in the ponds.

(d) Perimeter Path

Councillor Mrs JM Young reported that one quote had been received, the work required would be costly, and more quotes would be sought. The Committee would look for grant aid opportunities to assist this project.

(e) Car Park Drainage

Councillor Mrs JM Young reported that one quote had been received, the work required would be costly, and more quotes would be sought. The Committee would also look for grant aid opportunities to assist this project.

(f) Aerial Runway

The Aerial Runway had now been fixed by Massey and Harris (Engineering) Ltd who had tightened the cable.

(g) Moles

There was currently no mole activity in the park but the situation would continue to be monitored.

(h) Path by the Uniformed Groups' Headquarters

Quotes had been received to put down concrete and tarmac. Other quotes would be sought.

(i) Lintel from the demolished bus shelter that had been built to commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee

It was thought that Councillor B Kerr was keeping the lintel safe. If he was Members considered that it should be located somewhere in the village, if not in the Golden Jubilee Park.

62. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPOSALS FOR LAND AT LODGE LANE

There was no progress to report in respect of the Affordable Housing Project.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to contact Chester District Housing Trust's Development Officer, Holly Stiles to obtain a progress report on the Affordable Housing Project.

{Following the meeting Ms Stiles informed that the planning application was still being considered by Cheshire West and Chester Council. The Housing Trust understood that planning officers were reviewing whether, as part site was allocated for recreational use, the application would result in a short fall of recreational space. Realistically this meant that the Planning Authority was considering where a commuted sum was required via a S106 agreement.

In respect of the Housing Trust's preparations to start on site, it was unable to apply for a newt licence until the planning application was determined. In the meantime, the Housing Trust was preparing the paper work to allow the application to be made as soon as possible. Tender documents were also being drawn up to allow the scheme to be tendered in the new year, hopefully allowing it to have a contractor identified and ready to start the newt trapping in March 2012.}

63. THE REDEVELOPMENT OF WAIN HOUSE

The redevelopment works were complete and residents were moving in. It was reported that the new trees had still not been planted and the new lighting system was far too bright at Wain Court.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be requested to contact Chester District Housing Trust's Development Officer, Holly Stiles to find out when the trees would be planted at Wain Court and inform that the lighting was considered too bright.

{Following the meeting Ms Stiles informed that the Housing Trust was seeking a date for the tree planting at Wain Court from its contractor and when one was identified the Parish Council would be informed}

64. THE LOCALISM ACT 2011 AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The Committee gave consideration to information provided by Cheshire Community Action's (CAA) Community Led Planning Officer, Claire Jones. This included a guidance note on Parish Plan Renewal for Members' consideration.

Ms Jones also informed that the fact that the Council has already completed a Parish Plan (albeit a few years ago) should put it in a strong position to produce a good quality Neighbourhood Plan as it was crucial that it knew its community needs before it could decide on any development and land use policies. However, before the Council decided to go down the route of a Neighbourhood Plan there were some things that the Council ought to consider:

Neighbourhood Planning is a new initiative that is still in development at a national policy level which means the process is still unclear and some parishes are choosing to wait until the legislation is better established and the statutory process is clear on how the plans will feed into the Local Authority Planning policies and meet the needs of communities.

The Local Authority has a key role to play in this as Neighbourhood Plans will have a statutory status so it's the Cheshire West Local Planning Authority that you will need to contact.

Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) Council and CCA are working together to deliver some Neighbourhood Planning Workshops.

Also think of what you want to get out of a Neighbourhood Plan – it's likely to be a long term commitment (possibly over 2 years depending on the process) for both the Parish Council and the community so it will take a lot of time and resource. If it is community involvement Saughall wants to improve then a revisited Parish Plan can galvanise a lot of community level action bringing new volunteers forward for local projects but if it's a development or land use issue that is the main focus, then a Neighbourhood Plan could be the better option in the long term.

CCA was in discussions with CWAC Council about how Neighbourhood Plans would be delivered across Cheshire West as it was also a huge resource issue for the Council who would need to support Parishes along the way. CCA may have a role in supporting the community engagement and organising the community so that it could effectively contribute to a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Clerk and some Members had attended the Neighbourhood Planning Workshops referred to above and reported that the cost of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan was expected to be way in excess of £17,000 and, at the current time, they did not consider such an initiative to be cost effective as it was unclear exactly what benefits could be derived from having one. Consequently, the recommendation to the Council at the present time was not to embark on a Neighbourhood Plan but to start work to refresh the Parish Plan.

Members were aware that there were grants available to assist the Neighbourhood Planning process and these could be monitored along with the benefits local councils with Neighbourhood Plans derived and Neighbourhood Planning could be revisited if Members considered it appropriate to do so at a future date.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the information in respect of both Neighbourhood and Parish Planning provided by CCA be noted;
- (2) the Council be **RECOMMENDED** not to go down the Neighbourhood Planning route at the current time;
- (3) the Council be **RECOMMENDED** to begin work to refresh the Parish Plan and identify and actively seek grant aid to assist this process;
- (4) the Council be **RECOMMENDED** to take the cost of the Parish Plan process into account when it sets its 2012/13 Budget;
- (5) if the Council is agreeable to the recommendation at (3) above, Claire Jones be invited to a future meeting of this Committee to make a presentation on the Renewal of the Parish Plan and answer Members' questions; and
- (6) the Neighbourhood Planning process be monitored and any developments be reported to this Committee.

65. LITTER PICKING AND WASTE BINS

(a) Waste Bins

It was reported that the litter bin at the bus stop on Church Road by the Vernon Institute had been replaced by Cheshire West and Chester Council. The other bins in the village were all in reasonable condition.

(b) Current Litter Picking Arrangements

The Committee was monitoring the Council's current litter picking arrangements to ensure that the village was as tidy as possible. Councillor RA Storrar reported that Fiddlers Lane was in need of a litter pick and Councillor Mrs JM Young agreed to discuss this with Councillor B Kerr with a view to asking the Council's contractor to carry out the work required.

(c) New Litter Picking Contract

Members were reminded that tenders for the Council's new Litter Picking Contract to run from 1 April 2012 were invited by the deadline of 5pm on Friday, 9 December 2011.

RESOLVED:

That the reports be noted.

66. YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Councillor WI Humphrey reported that the Youth Club was being visited by up to forty youngsters each week and it enjoyed the support of four Youth Leaders.

The outside of Youth Club's building had recently been repainted and a new Youth Club sign had been ordered.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

67. SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK RIGHTS OF WAY

Further to Minute No. 52 of the last meeting when Members noted the content of letters from the Mid-Cheshire Footpath Society and the Clerk to Mr Tony Leach, the Council's Footpath Warden about problems experienced on the Public Rights of Way within the Parish, Councillor Mrs JM Young reported that she had spoken to Mr Leach who had the matter in hand and the necessary repairs were being carried out.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

68. FUTURE PRIORITIES

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.

A Sports Pavilion in the Golden Jubilee Park

As this will be a very large capital project for the Council to undertake it may determine that the new building will reflect a modern, forward thinking community, and that it will 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 is 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.

This initiative is also included in the Parish Council's Business Plan. Some Members have visited Neston Cricket Club at Parkgate and are very impressed with the facilities provided there.

The deeds for the Council's land on Fiddlers Lane must be checked.

A New Parish Plan

Work can now 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.

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

Neighbourhood Planning

With the Council's agreement local councils' activities in this regard will be monitored and the subject revisited if Members consider it appropriate to do so.

Woodlands Trust – Free Trees

The Tree Warden is to choose the trees and where to plant them in the village. She has not done this yet.

Protection of the Green Belt

Identify Saughall land owners and plot on a map. Cheshire West and Chester Councillor Brian Crowe has been asked to provide the map.

Community Events

The Council is supporting and helping facilitate events such as:

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee – Monday, 4 June 2012.

The Council has put £2000 aside to help fund this event in a designated fund. A Co-ordination Committee of parishioners is moving this initiative forward and planning the event. Members are invited to attend its meetings and help.

A risk assessment must be carried out and appropriate public liability insurance must be in place.

Remembrance Sundays (Second Sunday in November) - 11 November 2012

The 2011 event was well organised and an improvement on the previous year.

Roll of Honour

This is to be taken into account when the Council sets its 2012/13 Budget.

Village Sports Days.

Christmas Lights Switch on Ceremony - 1 December 2011 was a successful event and the police did a fantastic job. A similar event will be arranged for December 2012.

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.