

MINUTES OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
held on 11 April 2011 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

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

Cheshire West and Chester Councillor B Crowe

And 4 parishioners as recorded in the attendance register

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor JG Johnson
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor RA Storrar

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of Saughall and Shotwick Park's Parish Meeting held on 26 April 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman welcomed parishioners to their Annual Assembly and then presented her Annual Report setting out the Council's achievements and successes over the last twelve months. She detailed ongoing initiatives, progress and the Council's aims and aspirations for the future.

Various issues were highlighted and considered in detail, these included:

- **Challenges Facing the Council**

The Council was coming to the end of five years in office. It had not escaped the problems and uncertainties affecting the wider community and over the coming year, difficult times and hard decisions would face the new Council, to be elected in May, in providing local services.

Under the new Localism Bill, the Government was relying on local community bodies, like parish councils, to act as a tool to empower communities to take on more responsibility. Many new opportunities for local people to positively

influence change were anticipated. The Council welcomed the range of new powers, freedoms and flexibilities for local communities and people. In particular, the rightful recognition of the key role of parish councils as being at the heart of its definition of what constituted a neighbourhood or community.

The Council wanted able and community minded people to be elected to the new Council to help drive these changes. In preparation, a Working Party had been meeting to make recommendations to the Council on how it should improve and strengthen its practices and procedures. It needed to be more efficient and effective so it had capacity to perform a useful community function and play its role at the heart of Localism and the "Big Society".

The Chairman informed that the formal part of this evening's meeting would consist of her report on activities over the last year, a financial report and a question and answer session. Those in attendance were told to feel free to express their views and explore ideas on how the local community should be run, how services traditionally provided by Councils could be delivered in future and on the "Big Society".

- **Parish Council Surgeries**

The Council aimed to be effective, transparent and open and so it continued to hold Council Surgeries monthly between 10.00am and 10.45am, usually outside the Co-op Store on the Saturday immediately before the Council meeting. Dates were published well in advance in Parish Newsletters and on village notice boards.

- **Business Planning**

The Council was currently considering whether to draw up a Business Plan setting out its vision and priorities for the next five years and acknowledging the important role of community groups in the village, who shared a common vision. Such a Plan could help the Council fulfil its role within the community and provide a basis for local people to be involved in shaping the future of Saughall.

- **Parish Planning**

Information contained in the current Parish Plan had been collected, following consultation with Saughall residents and businesses, over a period of twelve months during 2003/04. This process would begin again once the Localism Bill had been enacted and would result in a new Parish/Neighbourhood Plan. It was considered important that local people now began to think about what type of village they wanted to live in, in the future, looking twenty years or so ahead. This was in line with the concept of "localism".

- **Finance**

The Council was facing a period of austerity and therefore it had set a very prudent budget for 2011/12, keeping the Parish Precept at the same level as in 2010/11 at £44.53 per household per Band D property. It was imperative to continue to watch expenditure, obtain value for money and ensure that cost

effective services were provided. Councillors always scrutinised the need for any unplanned expenditure and exercised good financial management.

The Council's budgets for the financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11 were as follows:

2010/11	£61,732
2011/12	£62,796

Council Budget 2010/11		Council Budget 2011/12	
Budget Head	Allocation (£)	Budget Head	Allocation (£)
Environment	19,050	Environment	16,866
Admin	26,880	Admin	25,130
Police	11,800	Police	11,800
Neighbourhood Management Team	1,000	Neighbourhood Management Team	1,000
		Community Facilities and Projects	5,000
Contingency	3,002	Contingency	3,000
Total	61,732	Total	62,796

- **The PCSO Initiative**

Safety and security remained the cornerstone of this Council's vision for Saughall. Therefore, the Chairman was pleased to report that the Council's PCSO initiative continued to work well. Saughall had had its own PCSO since April 2007 when Mike Butler had taken up the position. The Council had signed a further three-year agreement with Cheshire Police, running from April 2011 to March 2014 at a cost of £11,800 per annum.

PCSO Wendy Leason had been assigned to Saughall since last November. She had fitted in very well and was doing an excellent job and the Chairman thanked her for her valuable contribution to the reduction of crime and disorder and the promotion of public reassurance and quality of life in the village.

- **Homewatch**

Saughall Homewatch continued to thrive. Its activities were co-ordinated by Councillor Ian Humphrey. Ian provided a valuable service and the Chairman paid tribute to him and thanked him for his hard work and commitment to this initiative. Anyone who would like to join the Homewatch was requested to contact Ian. Joining did not incur any expense and all were welcome.

- **Neighbourhood Management Team**

The Team was pursuing grants and had held a Quiz Night and Fish and Chip Supper to raise money to help fund projects and initiatives to make Saughall a safer place to live. The Team had run a very successful Summer Play Scheme in July 2010 and would be running another one this summer, aided

by a grant of £1,700 from the Rural West Area Partnership Board and NHS Western Cheshire Chairman's Discretionary Grants Scheme.

All Team members were thanked by the Chairman for their tireless efforts, which had made a real difference to Saughall.

- **Litter Picking Contract**

Since April 2011 CWAC had provided Saughall with some litter picking to an agreed standard and disposed of the waste it collected. Consequently, it no longer provided the Parish Council with a litter picking grant.

The Council now had a temporary, one year, Litter Picking contract with Roy Hipkiss at a cost of £6,500 to supplement what CWAC provided. This new contract should ensure that Long Lane, Church Road, Hermitage Road and Sea Hill Road were de-littered once a week, along with the full length of Fiddlers Lane. The housing areas were being de-littered once a fortnight by CWAC. The daily de-littering arrangements in respect of the Golden Jubilee Park were included in the Council's contract with Mr Hipkiss along with the de-littering of the bus shelters. The waste collected would be disposed off under the contract by Mr Hipkiss.

As both Councils' litter picking arrangements were new they remained under review and may be revised so that de-littering activities complimented rather than duplicated each other. Hence the need for the temporary contract that ran to 31 March 2012. A new contract from 1 April 2012 would be drawn up and let next year.

- **Golden Jubilee Park**

During the year the old multi-play unit and slide had been removed at a cost of £258 and replaced at a cost of £9,763. £4,000 of grants from CWAC had helped fund this. Also, due to mindless vandalism a new cable, seat and spring costing £567.53 had been installed on the Aerial Runway.

Via a Joint Use Agreement, Saughall Cricket Club maintained the pitches and play areas within the Park at a price to be agreed annually (2010 - £2,500). The drainage in the car park was still not working and in the winter, when there was a lot of rain and snow, it was waterlogged. The new Council would need to tackle this problem in the summer by commissioning further drainage work.

The Council was working with the Planners at CWAC on a design for a permanent sports pavilion. This project was very much in its infancy and was dependant on the Council, village sporting organisations and other prospective users working together in partnership to attract the necessary funding.

- **Vernon Institute**

The Council had built up and maintained a savings fund which it used to provide grants towards the costs of improving the fabric of the Vernon Institute, a listed building and an important community facility and village meeting point. The Council had contributed £1,140 towards the cost of gas

pipes and a new boiler this year. It had also donated £1000 towards the refurbishment of the clock tower.

- **The Greyhound Inn**

The Greyhound Inn had closed last autumn and had been standing empty ever since. Local residents had raised concerns about its dilapidated state and so the Clerk had contacted its owners Enterprise Inns Plc to request a meeting with them to discuss their plans. The meeting had been held on 7 February 2011 at the Vernon Institute and although it had not been a public meeting, a number of villagers had turned up.

Enterprise Inns had confirmed their commitment to the long term future of the pub and that they were seeking to recruit a suitable licensee. Their intention had been to improve the pub for the local community and re-open it at Easter. However, the Council had now learnt that the start date for the work had been slightly delayed due to other jobs overrunning but had been assured that work would commence within the next couple of weeks. Unfortunately, this meant that the pub would not be open until 27 May.

- **Traffic Congestion at All Saints Primary School**

The Council was still concerned by the traffic congestion on Church Road and in the Co-op Store's car park caused by parents dropping off and picking up their children from School. Councillors had worked with PCSO Wendy Leason, the School and CWAC's Highways Officers to discourage parents from transporting their children by car. The Council remained interested in supporting events like Walk to School Month and Walk to School Week. It did have concerns over the School's Transport Plan.

- **Former Ridings Infant School Building**

The Clerk had written to the Secretary of State for Education setting out the Council's objection to the sale of the former school building on the grounds that it could be put to good community use.

Notwithstanding this, it was expected that the site would eventually be sold for housing development so the point had also been made to its owners, CWAC, that the village had not received any material benefits or planning gain from any previous developments in the village. If Saughall was to receive a benefit this time, the Council's preference was for help to carry out further improvements to leisure and recreational facilities within the Golden Jubilee Park.

- **Highways Issues**

Councillors spent a lot of time at Council meetings talking about traffic congestion, problems with the buses, damage to grass verges, parking, potholes and speeding cars. They worked with the Police, the Highways Authority and the bus companies to try to remedy these problems. Councillors and volunteers had been trained to use a speed gun and a speed indicator device, which was borrowed from the Principal Authority. The Council still

aspired to meet the criteria laid down to become a community speed watch area.

- **Remembrance Sunday**

The Council had received expressions of thanks and appreciation in respect of the Remembrance Sunday Service it had organised, for the first time, following complaints that remembrance of all who suffered and died in conflict in the service of their country and all those who mourned them was not marked sufficiently in the village. The Chairman had attended the service at the war memorial, as did other Parish Councillors and had had the honour of laying a Royal British Legion poppy wreath on the Council's behalf. It was hoped that the Council would continue to take the lead to ensure that this commemoration continued.

- **Wain House Re-development**

Chester and District Housing Trust had wanted to call the Wain House re-development Oakwood. However, following representations by the Council it had now agreed to call it Wain Court. Councillors did not want to lose the old name from the village completely.

Anyone who was interested in the new properties were requested to contact the Housing Trust.

- **Affordable Housing Scheme**

CWAC completed an external tender process last year resulting in Chester and District Housing Trust being appointed to the scheme. It was now working with the Parish Council to shape it and agree physical and technical elements. Councillors had told the Housing Trust that they would like the proposed development to be called Thomas Wedge Close.

- **Planning**

The Council was a statutory consultee on all planning applications in its area. The Council considered all applications at its Planning Committee meetings. In the course of this Municipal year the Committee had dealt with 24 applications compared with 30 last year. The number of plans being submitted each year had been decreasing, probably due to the economic downturn. Members of the public were very welcome to attend these meetings. The Committee's observations were sent to CWAC advising, where necessary, on local information and issues.

- **Communications**

The Council's website was regularly updated (www.saughall.gov.uk) to keep people abreast of its activities etc. Councillors were now considering carrying out improvements to it to make it more modern and user-friendly and were also exploring social networking. The Council published a quarterly newsletter and local people and village organisations were actively encouraged to contribute to it and/or advertise in it. Parishioners did enjoy reading it. The

Clerk could be contacted by email and parishioners were requested to use this facility to send her items and photographs for inclusion in future issues and to pass on any comments to the new Council. (clerk@saughall.gov.uk)

- **Thanks**

The Chairman thanked all Parish Councillors for all the time and effort they had devoted to their duties. They had done this on an entirely voluntary basis and every Councillor was concerned for the well-being of the parish and had the best interests of the village at heart.

Helen Thorniley–Jones had resigned from the Council last December because of personal reasons. Councillors had been sorry to see her step down but had accepted her reasons for doing so. The Chairman thanked Helen for her contributions and hard work over the years she was a Councillor.

The Chairman also thanked Andrew Storrar, Brian Crowe and Eleanor Johnson the three Cheshire West and Chester Councillors for all their hard work and dedication to the village who together with Parish Councillors, had focused on the standard and quality of services CWAC had delivered to local residents. New electoral arrangements came into force at the Borough Council elections in May. There would be a new single-member Saughall and Mollington ward. Also, all 14 Parish Council seats were up for election.

The Chairman thanked Tony Leach, the Parish Paths Warden, for walking all the public and permissible footpaths in Saughall and Shotwick Park and reporting problems encountered to CWAC, Helen Cakebread for her work as the Tree and Environmental Warden, the Internal Auditor Bob Salisbury and the Responsible Financial Officer, Graham Hudspeth for their work on the accounts and for attending Council meetings and finally she thanked the Parish Clerk, Shirley Hudspeth for her contributions, advice and support during the years she had been Chairman of the Council.

Also, the Chairman thanked those parishioners, who had helped the Council by bringing matters to its attention, and/or who had come along to Council meetings.

- **In Conclusion**

The Council had had a very busy year and had done its best to discharge its duty on behalf of the village. The Council may not get it right all the time and it may not always win but Councillors were committed to building on their successes and to improving services for the benefit of the people of Saughall. The Council had different political philosophies between its Members but when Councillors entered the Council meeting they all had one common aim – **improving Saughall.**

4. PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Questions and subsequent discussions centred on the following issues:

- **Saughall Cricket Club**

Mr Wilkes informed that the Cricket Club was going from strength to strength. It now had two teams and that meant that there would be cricket in the Golden Jubilee Park every Saturday during the season.

- **Litter Picking**

At the request of Mr G Barnsley litter picking was discussed in greater detail. Councillor B Kerr outlined the history, CWAC's new litter picking arrangements, the fact that the Parish Council no longer received an annual Litter Picking grant of £5,250, primary statutory responsibilities, street cleaning standards set out in the Environmental Protection Act, further details in respect of the temporary Litter Picking contract the Council now had with Mr Hipkiss, including litter picking in the Golden Jubilee Park and the need to review the arrangements currently in place before a new Litter Picking contract was let during 2012.

- **Golden Jubilee Park**

At the request of Mr H Dobson further details in respect of the grass cutting arrangements with Saughall Cricket Club were set out.

- **Parish Council's Website**

At the request of Mr H Dobson the arrangements in place in respect of the Council's website were discussed. It was reported that the Council had purchased its domain name, that the website was hosted free of charge by CWAC and that various links were in place. The Clerk's contact details were linked to the CWAC website and the websites of Groups and organisations in the village could be linked to the Parish Council's website.

- **Saughall Neighbourhood Management Team**

At the request of CWAC Councillor B Crowe the detail of successful funding applications made by the Team to finance the Summer Play Scheme were discussed. It was noted that the overall cost of the Scheme was £2,300 approximately.

- **Permanent Sports Pavilion**

More detail on this initiative was sought but the meeting was reminded that the Chair had stated that replacing the Uniform Groups' Headquarters with a Sports Pavilion was very much in its infancy and there was no more to report than what had been set out in the Chairman's Annual Report. This was at least a ten year project, dependant on grant aid. The next stage would be to consider car parking arrangements.

- **Parish Planning**

Mr H Dobson requested further detail on the proposed new Neighbourhood/Community Plan. It was noted that there would be a

presentation by John Heslewood of Cheshire Community Action at the Council meeting on Monday, 6 June 2011. Work would probably not commence on this until the Localism Bill was enacted later in the year as it had implications for the planning process.

- **Parish Paths**

Councillor D Holman raised concerns over the number of stiles in poor condition on public rights of way and asked CWAC Councillor B Crowe if his Council had any kissing gates that could be installed as had been the case in a previous year. Councillor Crowe was not very optimistic, other than if stiles were deemed to be dangerous replacements would be arranged, given the current financial climate but agreed to find out and report back.

- **Affordable Housing Schemes**

Mr H Dobson sought further progress regarding the Affordable Housing Scheme on Lodge Lane. The Chairman informed that there was to be a further meeting of the Working Group on Monday, 18 April 2011. The Chester and District Housing Trust was trying to address drainage issues, Councillors had been given a plan of the site and it was intended that the new dwellings would be environmentally green.

Mr H Dobson sought clarity on any benefit that could be provided to the village if new housing was eventually built on the former Ridings Infant School site. This would be a separate consideration and the Parish Councillor would want to see the developer putting something back into the village. It was expected that 25% of any housing built would need to be classed as affordable but could be built on a different site in the village. It was noted that CWAC, the owner of the former school building, had carried out its tender process during the previous week but that the outcome was unknown as yet.

- **Remembrance Sunday**

Reference was made to Remembrance Sunday and to the recent discovery that the names of two soldiers, Corporal JA Benson and Private Ralph Moroney, who died in November 1918 and were buried in war graves in the Methodist Church Yard, were not on the Roll of Honour. The Clerk had made enquiries with Royal British and been told to go ahead and arrange for these soldiers names to be added to the Roll.

From discussions that ensued it was established that there may be four additional names to be listed on the Roll of Honour. The detail would be checked out and a new plaque would be engraved as appropriate and attached to the wall of the Vernon Institute in due course.

5. VOTE OF THANKS

Mr G Barnsley proposed a vote of thanks in respect of the Chairman, Councillors and the Clerk for all of their dedication, hard work and commitment during the year in respect of the Council's activities. This was seconded by Mr H Dobson, agreed and actioned.