



SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

Summary

Your Parish Council exists to represent and work in the interests of everyone in Saughall and Shotwick Park. To be effective we need to tell you what we are doing and to seek your views and at times your help and participation. My Annual Report provides you with a summary of our activities during the 2011/12 Municipal Year and includes budgetary information. It also sets out details of the elected Councillors and the Clerk and lists the Council's priorities for the year ahead.

Sadly Saughall and Shotwick Park had insufficient candidates for there to be an election last May. We were pleased to welcome Councillor Peter Young to the Council but we were left with one vacancy which we have chosen not to fill.

New Decision Making Process

The Council put a new decision making process in place at the beginning of the year. This was done to make the Council more efficient and effective in the way it conducts its business. It is regularly reviewed and some adjustments have been made. On the whole, the Committees are functioning well with their delegated responsibilities and the Council is demonstrating good governance.

Planning

The Planning Committee meets monthly, either in the Vernon Institute or the Uniformed Groups' Headquarters. Its primary aim is to encourage the Planning Authority to support sensible development, maintaining the openness of the Green Belt. The Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications in its area and considers all applications at its Planning Committee meetings. In the course of this Municipal Year we have dealt with 26 applications compared with 24 last year.

Tensions ran high during the year, as Saughall residents fought Cheshire West and Chester Council's (CWaC) plans for a Gypsy and Traveller site on Green Belt land, in CWaC's ownership at Oakwood Farm on Parkgate Road. Following a successful campaign, CWaC decided not to submit a planning application. This was thanks to the presence of a colony of rare bats in the vicinity.

The Council is currently being consulted on a proposal to build 31 two storey dwellings including a new site access (demolition of existing building) on the site of the former The Ridings Infant School, in Rakeway. The Planning Committee will consider this and formulate its response at its next meeting on 15 May 2012.

Parish Council Surgeries

We aim to be an effective, transparent and open Council and so we continue to hold Council Surgeries monthly between 10.00am and 10.45am usually outside the Co-op Store and at the Farmers' Market in the Vernon Institute, on a Saturday. Dates are published well in advance in Parish Newsletters and on village notice boards.

Business Planning

During the year we published our first ever Parish Council Business Plan. It is a “living document” and we intend to regularly review and refresh it. It maps out the Council’s hopes and aspirations for the future and is helping us to take a planned and consistent approach to:

- the design and delivery of the services we provide;
- prioritising and allocating our resources; and
- achieving real value for money.

Parish Planning

The Council has begun work on a new Parish Plan. Please stay behind after this meeting and join us for cheese and wine and, at the same time, let us have your ideas and opinions to help us develop a Plan for where you want Saughall and Shotwick Park to be in five to ten years time.

This is our way to find out about what you think of your village and to identify ways to make it better and it is your chance to have your say.

Finance

The Council has set its budget for 2012/13 and increased the Parish Precept by 23%. It is £54.98 per household based on a Band D property as opposed to £44.53 in 2011/12. We were unable to keep the precept static for a third year as the Council’s balances were down as low as £3,000. However, we will continue to watch expenditure, seek value for money and provide cost effective services. We will scrutinise the need for any unplanned expenditure and exercise good financial management.

The Council’s budgets for the financial years 2011/12 and 2012/13 are as follows:

2011/12	£62,796
2012/13	£66,296

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

Council Budget 2012/13	
Budget Head	Allocation (£)
Environment	16,366
Admin	29,130
Police	11,800
Neighbourhood Management Team	1,000
Community Facilities and Projects	5,000
Contingency	3,000
Total	66,296

Litter Picking

In an attempt to keep Council tax as low as possible, we made the decision not to supplement the litter picking arrangements put in place by CWaC with effect from 1

April 2012. We have only made budgetary provision to keep the Golden Jubilee Park, which belongs to the Council, clean and tidy.

However, the Council continues to monitor the state of the village. Any problem areas will be reported to CWaC who will be expected to deal with them. You too can report litter problems by ringing Tel No. **0300 123 8 123**.

The PCSO Initiative

Safety and security remains the cornerstone of this Council's vision for Saughall. We have had our own PCSO since April 2007 and this arrangement continues to work well. There are two years left on the current agreement with Cheshire Police and we contribute £11,800 a year.

PCSO Wendy Leason has been based in Saughall since November 2010. She fits in very well and is doing an excellent job. I would like to thank her and PC Rhys Matthews, the Beat Manager for Upton and Saughall, for their valuable contributions to the reduction of crime and disorder and the promotion of public reassurance and quality of life in this village.

Homewatch

Saughall Homewatch continues to thrive. Its activities are co-ordinated by Councillor Ian Humphrey. Ian provides a valuable service and I thank him for his hard work and commitment during the past year. If you would like to join the Homewatch please contact Ian. Joining costs nothing and all are welcome.

Neighbourhood Management Team

This Team takes action to solve problems within the community and works with local partners to improve the local environment and quality of life. It arranges and runs a popular summer play school each year.

Saughall is on the route of the Chester Marathon this year. The Neighbourhood Management Team is looking after a drinks station on 13 May 2012 and needs some helpers. Tony Summers is Chief Marshall and also requires some helpers.

The Neighbourhood Management Team is holding a Wine Tasting event on 15 June 2012 at the Vernon Institute to supplement its funds.

Thank you to all Team members for their tireless efforts, which have made a real difference to Saughall.

Golden Jubilee Park

The Council has replaced all the swing seats and chains and tightened the cable on the Aerial Runway at a cost of £528. The Cheshire railings have been painted this year at a cost of £220. We hope to be able to continue to develop the Park and provide additional play facilities as and when external funding becomes available.

Via a revised Joint Use Agreement, Saughall Cricket Club continues to maintain the pitches and play areas within the Park at a price to be agreed annually (2011 - £2,500).

The drainage in the car park is still not working and is often water logged. Professional advice is being sought.

The Council is working with the Planners at CWaC on a design for a permanent sports pavilion. This project is dependant on the Council, village sporting organisations and other prospective users working together in partnership to attract the necessary funding. A questionnaire is to be drawn up to survey the users of the Uniformed Groups' Headquarters on what a new building should provide. Those of you who stay behind for cheese and wine will also be asked for your views.

Vernon Institute

The Council has built up and maintains a savings fund which it uses to provide grants towards the costs of improving the fabric of the Vernon Institute, an important community facility and village meeting point.

The Vernon Institute Management Committee intends carrying out a rebuilding project. Plans have been drawn up and include a new multi-functional room with a stage which can accommodate 120 people, a coffee shop which could become the 'Tea and Chat' Centre for the village and a Social Club. The application for planning permission required a fee of £2,000 and the Council contributed half of this amount, on the understanding that we will not be asked for any further funding during the 2012/13 Financial Year.

Traffic Congestion at All Saints Primary School

The Council is 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. We have worked with our PCSO, the School and CWaC's Highways Officers to discourage parents from transporting their children by car. We remain interested in supporting events like Walk to School Month and Walk to School Week.

Highways Issues

We spend a lot of time at Council meetings talking about traffic congestion, problems with the buses, damage to grass verges, parking, potholes and speeding cars. We work with the Police, the Highways Authority and the bus companies to try to remedy these problems. Councillors and volunteers have been trained to use a speed gun and a speed indicator device, which we borrow from CWaC. We still aspire to meet the criteria laid down to become a community speed watch area and believe that in some parts of the village, Twenty's Plenty.

New Homes at Lodge Lane

Works to deliver new affordable homes on land off Lodge Lane have moved a step closer following Chester and District Housing Trust's successful tender exercise. Rowlinson Construction Ltd who is part of the Trust's established procurement Framework has been awarded the construction contract. The Trust is currently working with Rowlinson to achieve a start on site. You may have noticed that two trees adjacent to Lodge Lane have already been removed. This was to accord with requirements for works to be undertaken outside of the birds' nesting season. An application has also been submitted to Natural England for exclusion of the newts.

If planning consent is agreed, newt trapping can commence followed by a construction start in June or July.

Subject to planning permission, 18 properties, providing a mix of two and three bed houses and two bed bungalows could be completed by summer 2013 and be available as affordable rent and shared ownership. We have told the Housing Trust that we would like the proposed development to be called Thomas Wedge Close.

Wain House Re-development

Wain Court was completed in this Municipal Year and offers residents over the age of 55 a chance to live in high quality accommodation at an affordable rent. The official opening was on 27 January 2012. We are all extremely proud of the architecture, the layout and finish. There is wonderful garden space for residents to enjoy and a communal lounge to socialise with neighbours.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee

The Council invited all the various clubs and groups in Saughall to make proposals on how it would spend up to a maximum of £500 on a project, which must benefit the local community, to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The details of successful applicants will be announced soon.

Supporting Village Events

The Council supports various community events throughout the year.

- Remembrance Sunday

We received expressions of thanks and appreciation in respect of the Remembrance Sunday Service organised by the Council, for the past two years. I attended the service in November at the war memorial, as did other Parish Councillors and had the honour of laying a Royal British Legion poppy wreath on the Council's behalf. The Council will take the lead on this event to ensure that this commemoration continues.

- The Queen's Diamond Jubilee

Plans are well advanced for the 'Music in the Park' village event which is to be held on Monday, 4 June 2012 in the Golden Jubilee Park between 4pm and 10pm. The Council has put £2000 aside, out of its contingencies, to help fund it. There will be a Barbecue and a Beer Tent and you are welcome to bring your own picnic. Please join us.

- The Rotary Club of Saughall - Sports Day

Saughall Sports Day will be held on Saturday, 14 July 2012 in the Golden Jubilee Park with the famous Saughall Mile being a challenge for all. We hope for a great turnout.

- Christmas Celebrations

The Christmas Lights and Fayre are very well supported each year. There are lots of stalls and a Santa procession through village.

Communications

The Council's website is regularly updated (www.saughall.gov.uk) to keep people abreast of our activities etc. The University of Chester's Informatics Centre is currently carrying out website development work for the Council at a cost of £1,250. At the same time, a Vertical Display Board has been commissioned, at a cost of £203, and will prove very useful at Parish Council Surgeries.

We publish a very informative quarterly newsletter and local people and village organisations are actively encouraged to contribute to it and/or advertise in it. The Clerk can be contacted by email so please use this facility to send her items and photographs for inclusion in future issues and to pass on your comments to the Council. (clerk@saughall.gov.uk)

Thanks

I would like to thank our Parish Councillors for the time and effort they have devoted to their duties. They do this on a purely voluntary basis. Every Councillor is concerned for the well-being of the parish and has the best interests of the village at heart.

I would also like to thank Brian Crowe our CWaC Councillor for keeping us up to date with what is happening at Borough level and for all his hard work. He, together with Parish Councillors, focuses on the standard and quality of services CWaC delivers to our residents.

Thank you to Tony Leach our Parish Paths Warden, for walking all of our public and permissible footpaths and reporting any problems to CWaC, Helen Cakebread for her work as our Tree and Environmental Warden, our Internal Auditor, Bob Salisbury and our Responsible Financial Officer, Graham Hudspeth for their work on the accounts and for attending Council meetings. Last but not least, thank you to our Parish Clerk, Shirley Hudspeth for her contributions, advice and support during the year.

Also, many thanks to those parishioners, who have helped us by bringing matters to our attention, and/or who have come along to our meetings.

What's Next

Over the coming year the Localism Act will be implemented. It has big implications for parish councils, some good and some not so good, but whatever eventually comes out of the legislation I am sure that here, in this parish, we will rise to the challenge.

Jenny Young
Chairman
30 April 2012

Parish Councillor's Contact Details

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