



SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH COUNCIL

Community Engagement Strategy

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

As a local council we are closest to our community. We take care of them by providing local leadership. This is an important role and as their representatives we want to improve the quality and range of local services. To this end we are committed to becoming actively involved in all parts of our community by working closely with voluntary and community groups so that we are able to articulate their needs through effective communication. We shall do this by working in partnership with our local authority and other agencies so that we can pursue our ambition:

To give our local community a better deal on local services, and a stronger voice on decisions that affect their day-to-day lives.

PROFILE

Saughall is a Parish that lies to the north west of the City of Chester, and is contained within the Chester City District. It is 5 miles away from Chester City itself, so for many parishioners it acts as a “dormitory” village to the City.

However, unlike some other “dormitory” villages around the country, Saughall and Shotwick Park retain their distinctive and pleasant features that make the area a desirable place to live within the Cheshire property market. This may be down to the green belt that surrounds the village with open farmland on all sides. The western Parish boundary forms the historical boundary between England and Wales.

Three separate settlements of Great and Little Saughall and Shotwick Park make up the Parish area. Great and Little Saughall became part of the Saughall Civil Parish in 1948, whilst Shotwick Park joined up in 1972.

Currently, the village can be described as thriving, especially in comparison to some other parishes. The Parish contains:

- One new all through Primary School
- Toddler Group
- Private Nursery
- Playgroup
- Three Public Houses
- Two Places of Worship
- Vernon Institute (Village Hall)
- Playground, Sports Pitches and Leisure Facilities
- Scout Hut
- A Post Office
- And a Number of Retail Outlets

It has a population of approximately 3,585. Also, in terms of precept, it has one of the largest in the Chester Area with a levy of £52,011 for financial year 2010/11. The Parish Council tax per band D property is £44.53, which makes Saughall one of the highest locally taxed Parishes in the District. It is used to provide services and functions for the local community.

In April 1998 the Cheshire Community Council produced for the Parish Council a Community Survey report. This involved a survey of opinion on three aspects of life in Saughall:

- Current provision of Leisure/Recreational Facilities
- Crime/Community Safety
- The opportunities for effective dialogue between the Community and Police and between the Community and the Parish Council

The Cheshire Youth Service looked at the young people and their social and recreational needs (both short and long term) and undertook consultation. The findings provided the Parish Council with a steer to develop, and to encourage others to develop, facilities and activities in the Parish that will improve the quality of life of all residents. In response to this consultation exercise the Parish Council purchased 5.5 acres of land that is now in an advanced state of development providing recreational facilities for the whole village.

Following the findings of Chester City Council's Rural Housing Needs Survey in 2002, the Parish Council set up the Saughall Parish Rural Housing Working Group and invited officers from the Cheshire Community Council (the Rural Housing Enabler) and from Chester City Council's Housing and Planning Departments to become members and work in partnership to bring about the affordable housing required in Saughall to meet the needs of local people.

There are now ongoing negotiations by the Chester District Housing Trust and Cheshire West and Chester Council as landowners to purchase land off Lodge Lane that has previously had planning permission for 12 units of low cost housing (an "exceptions site").

The Parish Council is forward thinking and proactive. It holds monthly Parish Council Surgeries outside in the car park at the Co-op Store. It launched its own Website in 2001. This is currently hosted by Cheshire West and Chester Council free of charge and is an invaluable tool. It provides easy access to the latest news and to a database of all its Minutes etc. It promotes the village, improves community relations and informs on activities available. It is the public face of this Council.

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

Because Saughall and Shotwick Park Parish Council is acutely aware of local concern about development proposals and the threat of losing the parishes much loved rural ethos we wanted to give our community a chance to have their say. To this end the Parish Council decided in April 2003 that a Parish Plan should be developed and with the assistance of Cheshire Community Council obtained funding from the Countryside Agency to develop it.

A Steering Group was formed and its membership was drawn from Members of the Parish Council, local business people, and members of local Churches and other organisations. This ensured, as far as possible, that all aspects of life within Saughall and Shotwick Park had representation. In addition to the Steering Group, Focus Groups were set up covering the main areas of concern, as follows:

- Youth Issues
- Business and Economic Development

- Community Halls
- Traffic
- Community Safety
- Environment
- Transport & Pavements

Each Focus Group met on at least one occasion with invitations open to all the residents of Saughall and Shotwick Park to attend. As a result of these meetings areas of concerns were identified and questions raised that were put forward to form a questionnaire.

In March 2004 the Steering Group issued a comprehensive questionnaire to the residents of the Parish. The purpose of this was to:

- Collect useful background information
- Identify issues that were of concern to residents
- Establish what, if any, action was required

A questionnaire was hand delivered to every household in the Parish containing statistical data such as the age of each person in the household, their use of community facilities and their use of village services. The residents were also given the opportunity to state their opinions on the future development of specific areas and the general quality of life issues within their Parish.

The Steering Group was pleased with the response to this exercise as some 304 completed questionnaires were returned.

This Parish Plan is more than just a report on the survey results. It draws together the identified needs of the community, addresses their feasibility on how and when they can be implemented. The results demonstrated that the parish of Saughall and Shotwick Park has both positive and negative features. In order to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative the Parish Council will work in partnership with the community and other agencies.

Once the Parish Plan was in place an Action List was drawn up and the Council was committed to making progress and serve the needs of our local community. The Action Plan is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

In September 2008 the Council resolved:

“That as many outstanding activities as possible be completed during the life of this Council and the new Council, to be elected in May 2011, be urged to draw up a new Parish Plan.”

The last time the Plan was review was in October 2009.

MISSION STATEMENT

- We shall endeavour to: -
- Keep in touch with our local community through consultation
- Ensure that the local community is kept informed of future plans
- Encourage community engagement
- Encourage a sense of ownership

- Work in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council, other organisations and our local community
- Strive to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative aspects in our parish
- Strive to deal with all issues listed in our Action Plan

FOCUS FOR ACTION

We want to enhance the quality of life in our community by improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the parish of Saughall and Shotwick Park. We shall respond to the concerns of our community by keeping in touch through effective channels of communication. We shall endeavour to do this through:

- Consultation
- Public sessions at parish council meetings
- Offering the facility to pass comments to us via our Website, newsletters and at our Parish Council Surgeries

Environment

We want to ensure that our local environment is well maintained. We shall do this by working in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council to ensure that the parish is kept clean and tidy and aesthetically pleasing. We shall plant and encourage the planting of more trees/hedges and keeping existing hedgerows tidy and we will target the problem of dog fouling by working closely with the Dog Warden and providing more dog litter bins in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council. We will also seek to educate dog owners about the benefits of dog litterbins through our quarterly Newsletters.

We know how important the environment is to our community and in particular our green space and we want to ensure that this land is protected. Where possible we shall encourage our local community, through consultation, to protect green belt land from future development.

Climate change

The Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006 gives Parish Councils specific powers to tackle climate change and encourages us to inform our communities about tomorrow's climate; today's challenge. We shall encourage our community to reduce waste by re-using, recycling and recovering where possible and only using disposal as a last alternative. We shall do this through disseminating information in our Newsletters and on our Website.

Crime reduction

We take community safety very seriously, that is why we contribute financially (£11,800 per annum) towards our own Police Community Support Officer. We shall continue to participate in the quarterly Police 'Have You Say' meetings where members of the public can put issues of concern to the Police. We also have an active Homewatch and the Homewatch Chairman reports monthly to the Council on its activities and on incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Supporting the elderly

We want our elderly population to have a good quality of life. To this end we shall see what support we can offer/provide for local senior citizens groups through the new power of wellbeing.

Supporting young people

We know that young people are the future of our community and it is important that we invest in them. Young people under the age of 18 have the legal right to formerly express their opinions and for those opinions to be taken seriously. It is only through having rights that young people learn to respect other people's rights. Supporting the youth club and developing a youth council is a good way of incorporating young people in our community. Not only will young people benefit but so will the whole community since it leads to a safer, more vibrant and sustainable community for all residents. To this end we shall continue to support the youth club, consider establishing a youth council and ensure that there is adequate play and recreational provision since the children of today are the people of tomorrow. We shall do this by engaging with young people through consultation and by maintaining our close relationships with our local schools.

Public transport

We want to encourage people to make better use of public transport because it is better for our environment. It is also a good way of meeting people. We shall continue to work with agencies to ensure that there is adequate public transport at times when people need it and that it takes them where they want to go. We shall do this by continuing to attend the Bus Users' Group and Rural Transport meetings facilitated by Cheshire West and Chester Council where we can put forward the concerns of our local community.

Traffic management

We want to reduce the amount of speeding traffic through our village. It has been our aim for many years to have a pedestrian crossing facility on Church Road by the new Primary School. A Puffin Crossing was provided by Cheshire West and Chester Council as part of the new School development.

We will try to reduce the potential risk of accidents at hazardous junctions, seek to introduce speed restrictions such as speed bumps and/or chicanes, educate residents and visitors to "Kill their Speed" and encourage residents to park their vehicles on driveways or in garages. We will continue to support the community safety initiative to "Set the Pace" and encourage people not to speed in the village; and continue to make use of the speed

gun and portable speed indicator device to highlight the current speed at which people are travelling.

Local business and economic development

The Parish Council has a major role to play in ensuring that this community retains the services and facilities it needs. We want to support our local shops and businesses and keep a Post Office in Saughall. Village shops and businesses are important because people living in a rural area are often the most disadvantaged through income and limited mobility and are dependant on them.

Our village shops and businesses have been in decline in recent years. Many villages discover too late how important they were to their communities. The loss of a village shop, pharmacy or post office imposes a series of economic resource costs on the rural economy, creates significant inconvenience to both domestic and business customers and generates much extra car travel. There is widespread concern over the future of village retail services and a desire to stem the tide of decline and safeguard but develop the services they provide.

We will encourage the use the services available in the village. This will cut down on time and travel costs and help retain a vital local facility for the community. We will join in with village businesses and shopkeepers and promote them in our Newsletter on a regular basis. We will establish good working relationships with the business community who are trying to run businesses not charities and we will support any application through the Business Rate Relief Scheme and work with Cheshire West and Chester Council in an attempt to facilitate appropriate development to maintain or increase the customer base. We will work with prospective employers to create employment and develop new jobs within the village for its residents.

Health and wellbeing

We want to promote a healthy lifestyle within our community. We shall do this by supporting any fitness programmes that are run in the village and by participating in NHS consultation.

IN TOUCH WITH OUR COMMUNITY

We feel that consultation is the most democratic and suitable vehicle in which to keep in touch with our local community. Consultation allows local residents to express their views and inspires us as their representative body to ensure that their views are taken into account in any decision making process.

We have established links with local community groups and we want to ensure that their aspirations come to fruition. We shall do this by informing the relevant authorities about any issues of concern and shall endeavour to work in partnership to make their aspirations become a reality.

We shall continue to support and encourage the establishment of local community groups and forums since they are fundamental in bringing any issues of concern to the fore. We shall encourage constructive debate, engender active participation and foster a sense of ownership within our community through community engagement since it is central to the

democratic process. Saughall and Shotwick Park Parish Council supports social inclusion through effective community engagement. The Freedom of Information Scheme is intended to encourage local councils to publish more information and to develop greater openness and transparency. All local authorities are required to have a publication scheme, and to list the information it produces (Classes of information). This is available on our Website. Other information is available from the Parish Clerk, who also may know where to locate information not published by the Parish Council and who will help seek it out.