



# SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH COUNCIL

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## CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

### Introduction

This report is a summary of some of the actions and decisions taken by Saughall and Shotwick Park Parish Council over the last year, including details of our financial situation. We also report our activities through monthly meetings, our website, articles in the Parish Council Newsletter and via the notice boards in the village. There is also a public forum at the start of every Parish Council meeting when we welcome you to put forward your views or raise concerns.

The Council continues to provide value for money in respect of the work we do on the community's behalf. The Council manages matters relevant to the parish as well as its usual business of oversight of the highways, footpaths, street lighting, bins and the conservation area. We continue to enjoy good working relationships with other bodies serving the community within the parish.

### Finance

We've seen another positive year for Saughall and Shotwick Park, despite the current austerity. I can assure the residents of the village that their contributions, through the precept, have again been allocated with great care and on your behalf we have supported a number of organisations and events.

The Council has set its budget for 2014/15 and kept the precept the same as for 2013/14 which means that the Council Tax, for the third year running, is £54.98 per household per Band D property. This recognises the difficulties many of our parishioners are in because of the current financial climate. Budgets have been examined in detail and expenditure will be contained within tight fiscal requirements.

The Borough Council receives a grant from central Government in return for not increasing council tax, and it passes some of this grant down to parishes. Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) provided a grant of £5,490, the amount equal to the tax base reduction for the Council. The Government has advised that it will not cap precepts in 2014 - 2015. However, we continue to monitor the situation, as it is likely to change in the future.

CWaC also provided the Council with a New Homes Bonus grant from its Community Fund to the value of £10,228 for the financial year 2013/14 and this has been put into the Parish Council's Community Facilities Fund.

The Parish Council has asked CWaC Council for a Parish Precept of £59,543 for 2014/15. The Parish Council's budget amounts to £69,717. Budget comparisons are set out below:

2014/15	£69,717
2013/14	£76,906

<b>Council Budget 2014/15</b>	
<b>Budget Head</b>	<b>Allocation (£)</b>
Environment	16,450
Admin	18,350
Annual Payments	6,346
Community Facilities Fund	10,271
Police	11,800
Neighbourhood Management Team	500
Uniformed Groups' HQ Rental	500
Community Action Projects	1,000
War Memorial Fund/New Roll of Honour	1,500
Contingency	3,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>69,717</b>

<b>Council Budget 2013/14</b>	
<b>Budget Head</b>	<b>Allocation (£)</b>
Environment	18,800
Admin	20,250
Annual Payments	6,213
Community Facilities Fund	13,343
Police	11,800
Neighbourhood Management Team	500
Uniformed Groups' HQ Rental	500
Community Action Projects	1,000
War Memorial Fund/New Roll of Honour	1,500
Contingency	3,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>76,906</b>

### **General Power of Competence**

The general power of competence is the 'power to do anything that individuals generally may do'. In November the Parish Council met the conditions required to be granted the General Power of Competence (at least two thirds of the membership of the Council has been elected and the Clerk is qualified) and so declared itself eligible to exercise this power.

### **Community Governance Review**

CWaC is undertaking a borough-wide Community Governance Review and the Parish Council has asked that the residents of Shotwick Park be consulted over a proposal for them not to elect their own Shotwick Park Councillor but instead, take part in electing the 14 Councillors for Saughall; and subject to appropriate consultation, Melvory Drive be moved into Blacon.

### **Newsletter**

During the year our Newsletter was used by National Association of Local Councils' officials to demonstrate, to the Right Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, best practice at the local level. This is because the Newsletter is considered to be an example of straight forward reporting, without any political bias, and it also promotes and supports local businesses. We are happy to receive your views on this publication so please let the Clerk know.

### **Website**

The Saughall and Shotwick Park Parish Council website is up and running and can be found under [www.saughall.gov.uk](http://www.saughall.gov.uk) If you have an opportunity please have a look. If you have anything of interest you would like to publish please contact the Clerk. The website also has all the agendas and minutes of our meetings.

## **Planning**

One of the Council's primary aims is to encourage the planning authority, CWaC to support sensible development, maintaining the openness of the green belt. The Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications and this year it has considered and submitted observations on 40 applications, compared with 27 last year.

This year, as an adjoining Parish Council, we supported Mollington Parish Council by objected to a controversial planning application for a Student Village on land between Parkgate Road and Shelly Road, Chester. Primarily we considered the proposal to be inappropriate development in the green belt and there were sites identified in the City for student accommodation. Planning consent was refused.

## **Affordable Housing - Lodge Lane**

Planning permission was granted for 18 properties, providing a mix of two and three bedroom houses and two bedroom bungalows. Rowlinson Construction started work on site on 8 July 2013 and work is progressing well. It is expected that the project will be completed by the end of May 2014. The Housing Allocation Policy is awaited.

## **New Housing on the Former Saughall the Ridings Infant School**

The Council has met with CWaC's Principal Planning Enforcement Officer and the site Manager to discuss our serious concerns about the housing site's drainage. However, the Enforcement Officer did not share our concerns. He was aware that the pipes being put in had bigger dimensions than the existing ones on the road. We were concerned that they would not be able to take the water. We are aware that residents living in Newcroft have experienced similar problems in the past.

The Council has been informed that the larger pipe diameter has been agreed with Welsh Water and forms part of their approved drainage scheme and as Welsh Water has agreed this scheme there is no further action that can be taken with regards to planning enforcement.

The Clerk is now submitting formal representations to CWaC so that these drainage concerns are on record and can be referred to in the future if the need arises.

## **Proposal to build a Community Facility/Sports Pavilion**

The Pavilion Working Group has had plans drawn up and is now putting together a list of grant making organisations it can approach for funding to provide this facility.

## **Parish Council Surgeries**

We aim to be an effective, transparent and open Council and so we continue to hold Council Surgeries monthly at various times and locations around the village. Details are published well in advance on village notice boards.

## **Litter Picking**

The Council pays for the Golden Jubilee Park to be delittered regularly. It also monitors the state of the village but it remains CWaC's responsibility to keep the village clean and tidy. Any problem areas are reported and CWaC is expected to

take the appropriate action. Anyone can report litter problems by ringing Tel No. 0300 123 8 123.

### **The PCSO Initiative**

We have had our own PCSO since April 2007 and this arrangement continues to work well. We contribute £11,800 per annum and we consider this represents extremely good value for money.

### **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. This year more children attended the Summer Play Scheme than ever before. The Team helps each year with the Chester Half Marathon and will be looking after the water station again on 18 May. Thank you to all Team members for their tireless efforts, which continue to make a real difference to Saughall.

### **Golden Jubilee Park**

The play areas continue to be well used. The play equipment for younger children has received a coat of paint and the drainage work carried out last year seems to have solved the flooding problem. Two horses, in their quest to find food, have been escaping into the Park from a neighbouring field. The fence has been mended to stop this and the Cricket Club is repairing the damage to the pitch. The Parish Council and the Police are monitoring the condition of the horses and the Clerk has written to their owners. The Parish Council pays to have grass cut regularly throughout the summer, and to have the hedges cut each autumn.

During the last year the most important, and emotive, project that the Parish Council has been involved in has been the proposed Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). It will cost many thousands of pounds to install in the Golden Jubilee Park and is being paid for from external funding provided by Waste Recycling Environmental Limited (WREN) and match funding from Cheshire West and Chester Council's Rural Support Programme. This project has attracted the most external funding our community has ever received towards improving its sporting and recreational facilities. There are residents who are against the MUGA (particularly those who live in close proximity to the Park) because of a perceived lack of consultation and/or they are worried it will be a magnet for anti social behaviour. The consultation undertaken had satisfied the two grant providers but, nevertheless, a Public Meeting to discuss these issues was widely publicised and held on 7 December 2013 in the Uniformed Groups' Headquarters. The MUGA contract is expected to be awarded to the successful tenderer on Wednesday, after an analysis of the nine tenders received and consideration of the professional advice that has been sought.

### **Anti Social Behaviour**

The Parish Council held a meeting on 23 January 2014 with Inspector Kevin Chambers regarding concerns raised over anti social behaviour incidents, particularly in the Golden Jubilee Park. The Inspector accepted that serious incidents had occurred but had not been reported to the Police. I cannot enforce enough that it is crucial that all incidents are reported so that the Police see the extent of the problem, ensure their resources are targeted where they are needed,

perpetrators identified and actions taken. PC Paul Taylor and PCSO Wendy Leason are keeping the situation under close surveillance.

### **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 Parish Council has taken the opportunity to replace the cables and install motors to fully automate the VI Clock which is the War Memorial, at a cost of £7,530. It has also improved the Clock's illumination. The Council has a complete list of the names missing from the Roll of Honour and they will be included in a new Roll shortly.

### **Highways Issues**

We continue to spend a lot of time at Council meetings on 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. Concerns were raised about articulated lorries delivering to the Co-op Store and consequently, it was agreed that from 21 September 2013 delivery rotas would be adjusted so that there are only deliveries between 6am and 7am. Other adjustments have been made including moving the recycling boxes and sign and cordoning of parking bays whilst deliveries are in process. Also, improved signage makes the one way system clearer.

### **Home to School Transport**

CWaC has consulted the Council on proposed changes to its Home to School Transport provision. It is proposed that Year 7 children in September 2015, who live in Saughall and obtain a place at Upton High School, will not be able to access free school transport. Parents will have to pay for it themselves. The Parish Council has made representations about the walking route being unsafe for the accompanied child.

### **Supporting Village Events**

The Council is pleased to support various community events throughout the year.

#### **- Remembrance Sunday – 10 November 2013**

We have arranged Remembrance Sunday services for the last four years. I attended the service last November at the War Memorial, as did other Parish Councillors, and I had the honour of laying a Royal British Legion poppy wreath on the Council's behalf. The Council continues to take the lead on this important community event.

#### **- Music in the Park – 26 May 2013**

This was a wonderful event on a beautiful day. The crowds poured in to enjoy an excellent variety of musicians, singers and bands who entertained from 3 to 9pm. Thanks must go to all who attended and supported, all musicians who took part, all who generously provided raffle prizes, all who worked so hard on the day and to those who organised it.

### **- Christmas Celebrations – 4 December 2013**

The Christmas Lights and Fair continue to be very well supported each year. There are lots of stalls and a Santa procession through the village.

Plans are now progressing well in respect of the community events being held on 24 May 2014 (Michael Bubl  tribute act) and 25 May 2014 (Churches together – united ecumenical service to commemorate World War 1 in the morning and a ceilidh band in the evening).

### **Request for a Funding Contribution – All Saints Church - Rewiring**

Following a request for a grant the Parish Council has set aside  2,000 to help fund the rewiring work in All Saints Church, to be paid on its completion.

### **Saughall Postal Scheme – December 2013**

Bob Salisbury introduced and ran Saughall's very own private post scheme. The aim was to raise money towards the refurbishment of the Vernon Institute and the new Community Facility/Sports Pavilion to be built in the Golden Jubilee Park. The Parish Council provided  250 to pump prime the project which went well and will be repeated in 2014. Thanks Bob.

### **In Conclusion**

I would like to thank the Parish Councillors for all their input, hard work and advice to ensure the Parish Council does the best it can for its Parishioners. We have successfully completed and discharged all our duties while remaining financially sound and the village remains in a good condition. It is always worth remembering that none of the Councillors receive payment for their efforts. I would also like to thank Brian Crowe our CWaC Councillor for keeping us up to date with what is happening at Borough level.

Thank you to Tony Leach and Dennis Holman our Parish Paths Wardens, 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.

I would personally like to thank our Clerk Shirley Hudspeth for her support, often in difficult circumstances. 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.

That concludes my report - do you have any questions?

Jenny Young  
Chairman  
28 April 2014

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