



SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

Introduction

This Council is at the end of four years in office. It has not escaped the problems and uncertainties affecting the wider community and some Members have not always agreed with or supported the democratic decisions that have been made. However, we have all worked hard and tried to do what we each thought was best for our village. There will be difficult times ahead and more hard decisions on the provision of local services will face the new Council, to be elected in May.

I must try to summarise the past 12 months, the challenges we have faced, actions we have taken and inform of our progress and successes. I have been privileged to work with such a conscientious and dependable team of Parish Councillors and I want to thank you all for your support during the past year. I also want to thank all the volunteers who have sat on our various working groups, our Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) Councillor Brian Crowe, Environmental Officer Helen Cakebread, Footpath Warden, Councillor Dennis Holman, Independent Internal Auditor, Bob Salisbury, Responsible Financial Officer, Graham Hudspeth and the Clerk Shirley Hudspeth for all their help and assistance over the last year.

Jean Johnson

In October Jean Johnson resigned. Jean had served on the Council for over twelve years and her contributions have been invaluable. I thank her for her help over the years. We filled the casual vacancy by co-option and welcomed Andy Errington to the Council in January 2015.

Community Governance Review

2015 is something of a milestone year for Local Councils because of the changes brought about by the recent borough-wide community governance review of parished areas, on which the Council was a consultee.

The decision made in respect of Saughall and Shotwick Park results in boundary changes, the dissolution of the Council and the creation of a new one with the same name. The old Council's land, property and funds transfer to the new Council. The boundary changes mean that from 1 April:

- the properties of Pitts Farm, Willow Barn, Oakwood Farm, Hill View Farm, Rose Farm, Northfield, The Gibbet Windmill, Saughall Mill Farm, Saughall Mill Farm Cottage, Mill Cottage North, Mill Cottage South and Rendova Farm all fall within Woodbank parish;
- the properties of 3 Woodbank Lane, The Covert, Blue Haze, Orchard View, Park Farm, Roughwood Farm, The Willows and Fourways Farm all fall within Woodbank parish; and
- the property of 49 Melverley Drive fall within the Chester unparished area.

Although the new Council comes into being from 1 April 2015, it will have no Councillors elected or appointed to it until after the local elections in May. To ensure that any urgent business is able to be transacted, it has been agreed by CWaC that twelve serving Parish Councillors will act as its representatives on the new Parish Council during this interim period.

CWaC's Local Council Excellence Awards

This year the principal authority introduced awards to celebrate the role and value of local councils as the most local form of democracy and to showcase the work of all town and parish councils across the Borough.

We put ourselves forward for awards in four categories and I am delighted to tell you that at the annual Local Councils' Assembly held last Wednesday, it was announced that as well as winning the '**Providing Care and Support in the Community**' category, the Council was shortlisted (three were shortlisted in each category) in the '**Community Involvement**' and '**Effective Communications**' categories. What a tremendous achievement to round off the year. Well done to all concerned!

In our winning submission, amongst other things, we informed of our commitment and support to build affordable housing in Saughall and how we made successful representations to get the planned admission numbers at All Saints C of E Primary increased. We mentioned the village diary compiled by representatives of the 31 groups in the village, including the churches, how we support village events, help fund the PCSO and set up and financially support the Neighbourhood Management Team.

We also told how we plant bulbs to improve the look of the village; how we support the infrastructure and fabric of the Vernon Institute and that we financed the electrification of the VI clock. Also included was how we provide leisure and recreational facilities in the Golden Jubilee Park for all age groups and consult on proposals for improvements and provide grant aid to the local churches and organisations run by volunteers in the village that help and support local people.

National Association of Local Council's (NALC) Council of the Week

On 24 November 2014 the Council was heralded as NALC's Council of the week. It was featured in its weekly Newsletter. The article informed that the Council is involved in several improvement projects, including working closely with parents to support and deliver their wishes to improve the local play area and attracting external funding to create a Community Sporting and that the Council had received grant funding from WREN and CWaC to deliver the new Multi Use Games Area (MUGA).

The article also informed that the Council understands the need for good, clear communication, to make parishioners aware of what it is doing on behalf of the community. We've had website since 2001 www.saughall.gov.uk and it provides easy access to the latest news and information whilst promoting the village and its activities. Reference was made to the Council's Twitter Account [@SaughallPC](https://twitter.com/SaughallPC), which is an important community engagement tool, providing an instantaneous way of communicating. We take every opportunity to effectively communicate and

engage with parishioners and draw them to meetings. Since the launch of the twitter account, local residents have been invited to provide live twitter feeds throughout Council meetings on a number of occasions ensuring that those who are unable to attend meetings are able to understand a little more about what we do.

Being Council of the week was fantastic recognition for the Council and highlighted that it is very active and progressive and is willing to embrace the changing needs of local residents to ensure they are aware of the amount of work Members do to create a better place for them to live and work. .

Finance

We've seen another positive year for Saughall and Shotwick Park, despite the current austerity. I can assure parishioners 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. Through prudence and economies we ended the year in a very strong financial position. Over the past four years we have managed to keep the Council tax the same which means that it remains at £54.98 per household per Band D property. Budgets have been scrutinised and expenditure has been contained within tight fiscal requirements. We hope to continue with this approach of carefully scrutinising proposals and ensuring we are very careful with parishioner's money.

The Government has changed the way in which Council tax is charged, effectively reducing the tax base. To offset this CWaC has provided a grant of £4,777, the amount equal to the tax base reduction for this Council.

CWaC for the second year running has provided the Council with a New Homes Bonus grant from its Community Fund to the value of £10,228. This grant was for the Financial Year 2014/15 and some of it has been put into the Parish Council's Community Facilities Fund.

The Parish Council has asked CWaC for a Parish Precept of £59,433 for 2015/16. The Parish Council's budget amounts to £78,092. Budget comparisons are set out below:

2015/16	£78,092
2014/15	£69,717

Council Budget 2014/15	
Budget Head	Allocation (£)
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

Council Budget 2015/16	
Budget Head	Allocation (£)
Environment	30,505
Admin	19,819
Annual Payments	5,968
Community Facilities Fund	5,000
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
Total	69,717

Community Action Projects	1,000
War Memorial Fund/New Roll of Honour	Nil
Contingency	3,000
Total	78,092

Community Assets

The Council was successful with its applications for the Greyhound Inn and Conkers to be listed as Community Assets because they are of value to the community. This means that if either of these come up for sale, we have six months to put together a bid to buy it.

Once on the list the owner is obliged to give notice of any intention to sell the asset. There is then a process which brings this to the attention of the community and gives it the opportunity to make an offer. That is as far as it goes. There is no obligation on the owner to sell or to give the Council a right of first refusal. This listing is there to avoid the community missing the opportunity to negotiate an agreeable sale.

Planning

We want plans to be in keeping with the village aspects. The Council's primary aims are to encourage the planning authority, CWaC to support sensible development and maintain 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 36 applications, compared with 40 last year.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is proposing to build a new fire station on land off Powey Lane/A5117. The Parish Council, protective of the green belt, has objected to this proposal. However, the Service has said that the identified site is the only site suitable and available that will meet the operational requirements that the Service needs. We will have to wait and see what happens.

Affordable Housing – Thomas Wedge Road

The building work on the 18 properties that commenced on 8 July 2013, providing a mix of two and three bedroom houses and two bedroom bungalows has finally been completed and the keys were given to the new residents last week.

Willow Hey

The 28 new houses built on the Former Saughall the Ridings Infant School site are now occupied and the residents asked the Council to support them in objecting to a play area which was included as a condition of the planning permission. They don't want this play area because:

- It would be in a potentially dangerous position, opposite a busy junction. Greenway has high traffic volume and is subject to fumes. It is also a bus route.
- Maintenance costs of the play area will have to be met by the residents.
- The noise and the Impact on the elderly residential home-Wain Court.

- The eighteen new houses (Thomas Wedge Road) do not have a play area.
- Residents objected to this proposal, prior to Morris Homes being granted planning permission for the play area.

Consequently, the Clerk has written to Morris Homes objecting to the play area. She has proposed that instead of making separate play area provision in an area of the village that is not suitable for it, it would be more appropriate to provide the Council with funding to help it with its play equipment upgrade project in the Golden Jubilee Park to the benefit of all Saughall residents.

Proposal to build a Community Facility/Sports Pavilion

The Saughall Community and Sports Pavilion Working Group has had plans drawn up. It is trying to attract external funding and is arranging all sorts of fund raising events and activities to finance the building work which will be in the Golden Jubilee Park. The Council has a designated fund for this purpose.

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 and has, from this March, increased the Litter Picker's hours from nine to ten a month. 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 which is 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. The Team helps each year with the Chester Half Marathon and will be looking after the water station again on Sunday, 17 May. Thank you to all Team members for their tireless efforts, which continue to make a real difference to Saughall.

Golden Jubilee Park

- The New MUGA

On Saturday, 13 December 2014 the Council was delighted to welcome the Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Hugo Deynem to officially open the MUGA. This was the culmination of two years of hard work by the Council and its funding providers (FCC Environment, through landfill communities' funds administered by WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental LTD) and CWaC, from its Rural Support Funding budget). The MUGA creates a real community hub on the Golden Jubilee Park. I would particularly like to thank Councillors Kathy Ford, Dennis Holman and Andrew

Warrington who were the members of the MUGA Working Group that drove the project to completion.

The MUGA provides a fantastic all-weather space for local people to get them outdoors to have fun and exercise. We now have great facilities for children to engage in meaningful and worthwhile play which helps them to keep fit, and improve their social and sporting skills. I'm sure that, once the weather improves, the MUGA will be packed with children and parents alike playing all sorts of sports including netball, basketball, tennis and football etc. We want to encourage local people to form sports clubs e.g. Tennis, Netball and Volley Ball Clubs and make use of the MUGA. If you are interested in this please let us know.

- Play Ground Refurbishment

We recognise the need to modernise the offer for younger children in the Swing Park. A Working Group was established consisting of Councillors and local people who carried out surveys and consultations in respect of the current offer and on what people would like to see provided for the children in the 21st Century. A 'picture board' was produced and a number of companies approached. The Council hopes to go out to tender for new play equipment early in the new Municipal Year.

- Uniformed Groups' Headquarters

The Parish Council and the local community have pulled together to help support those that use the recently fire ravaged Uniformed Groups' Headquarters. The Insurance Company has indicated that the building will be refurbished and there have been many fund raising events held to help replace what was lost. Recently a pancake race was held and some Councillors attended this event to show their support and offer help and guidance at this difficult time.

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.

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.

War Memorial

A complete list of the names of the fallen that had been missing from the plaques at the Vernon Institute are now included on the new Roll of Honour that has been put in place with tamper proof fixings. I would like to say a big thank you to Councillor Andrew Warrington for all of his research and hard work to correct the omission.

Supporting Village Events

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

- Remembrance Sunday - 9 November 2014

A Remembrance Day Service, including a commemoration of the outbreak of WW1 and the War Memorial dedication, was held at the War Memorial on Sunday, 9 November 2014. There were 73 people in attendance. Everyone was then invited to enjoy light refreshments in the Vernon Institute.

100 poppies were knitted and crocheted by ladies of the village. They have been framed and now hang in the Vernon Institute accompanied by a plaque with appropriate wording commemorating 100 years since the beginning of WW1.

- Music in the Park Events

The weekend of events on 24 May 2014 (A Michael Bubl  Tribute Act) and 25 May 2014 (A Churches Together – United Ecumenical Church Service to commemorate World War 1 in the morning and the Black Cat Band (Ceilidh Band)) in the evening went very well.

A Working Group of Councillors and volunteers has arranged an event in the Park on Saturday, 6 June 2015 between 2-10pm when there will be a Jamboree of Music and Dance on two stages for all age groups. This will be on a different scale from anything that has been seen in Saughall before. It is expected that there will be 14 separate performances. There will be Brazilian Dancing, Street Dancing and Diddi Dancing performed by local children's groups between 2-5pm. There will be some heart stopping bands and solo acts performing between 5- 8pm, and then three very well-known bands will perform from 8-10pm.

- Christmas Lights Switch On – Monday, 1 December 2014

Once again this annual event went very well! There was a good turn out and all the children enjoyed themselves. It is hoped that this event will continue to improve in future years with good stalls and excellent entertainment.

Moving forward

Having seen what a few volunteers can do for the village, I would like to recommend that this approach continues so that we have groups of volunteers working with the Parish Council to develop plans to deliver projects with outcomes that we all can enjoy. So if you have time to spare and are looking for a project or have an idea that you think would benefit others within the community, please apply to speak at, and come along to, any of the council meetings or write to the Clerk with an outline of your proposal. The Council may agree to fund your initiative from its Community Facilities Fund.

Thank you.

Jenny Young
Chairman
30 March 2015

Parish Council's Contact Details

<p>Jane Edwards 16 The Close Saughall Chester, CH1 6BD 0780 781 6444 janeedwards66@hotmail.co.uk</p>	<p>Andy Errington Hillcrest Cottage 130 Hermitage Road Saughall Chester. CH16AG 01244 880174 andrew.errington3@virgin.net</p>	<p>Kathy Ford 6 Vernon Close Saughall Chester CH1 6BH 01244 881459 katherine.ford1@btinternet.com</p>
<p>Dennis Holman 28 The Ridings Saughall Chester CH1 6AX 01244 881593 d.holman@chester.ac.uk</p>	<p>Howard Jennings Copperfield Church Road Saughall Chester CH1 6EN Howard.Jennings@collegeoflawalum ni.co.uk</p>	<p>Brian Kerr OBE 33 Greenway Saughall Chester CH1 6EG 01244 880347 brian543kerr@btinternet.com</p>
<p>Janette Knox 7 Rosewood Grove Saughall Chester CH1 6AN 01244 881259 janknox51@gmail.com</p>	<p>Rakesh Shukla 30 Church Road Saughall Chester CH1 6EP 01244 881765 rakesh@saughallpharmacy.co.uk</p>	<p>Andrew Storrar Hey House Farm Fiddlers Lane Saughall Chester CH1 6DH 01244 880226 andrewstorrar@hotmail.co.uk</p>
<p>Jeanne Storrar Hey House Farm Fiddlers Lane Saughall Chester CH1 6DH 01244 880226 jeannestorrar@hotmail.co.uk</p>	<p>Andrew Warrington 6 Worsley Avenue Saughall Chester CH1 6BG 01244 880418 andrewwarrington@hotmail.co.uk</p>	<p>Dolores Whitton JP 2 Darlington Crescent Saughall Chester CH1 6DB 01244 881411 dandpcwhitton@talktalk.net</p>
<p>Jenny Young – Chairman 212 Hermitage Road Saughall Chester CH1 6AE 01244 881133 chairman@saughall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Peter Young 62 Hermitage Road Saughall Chester CH1 6AQ 01244 880685 pete4848young@yahoo.co.uk</p>	<p>Clerk to the Council Shirley Hudspeth 10 Merton Close Little Neston Cheshire CH64 0TR 0151 336 3367 clerk@saughall.gov.uk</p>