

GUILDEN SUTTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 15 May, 2000 in the Methodist Schoolroom.

Chairman: Cllr Fisher.

Apologies: Cllrs Astbury, Whitehouse, City Cllr B J Bailey, City Cllr J R Boughton.

Present: Cllrs Arditti, Armitage, Fisher, Gartland, Hughes, Patten.

In attendance: N J Fitton Esq CC.

1. Minutes.

The minutes of the annual parish meeting held on Monday 19 April, 1999 were proposed by Cllr Gartland, seconded by Cllr Arditti and agreed as a correct record.

2. Annual report.

Presenting the Council's Annual Report for 1999/00, the Chairman said that as always, 1999/00 has been an extremely busy year for the Parish Council on behalf of the local community.

The quadrennial parish elections had been held in May, 1999. Cllr Antrobus had retired with the Council's best wishes and thanks for her service to the council and the community. Seven nominations had been received for the eight vacancies and the Council had been pleased to welcome back Anna Patten. To fill the vacancy, the Council were pleased to co-opt Derek Hughes who had also served previously as a councillor.

The Council had been delighted to congratulate Cllr Armitage on his receiving a Star Citizen Award from the Rt. Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Chester in recognition of his service to the community. Gordon Bebbington Esq had received a similar award.

Monthly meetings had been held throughout the year, apart from August, together with site meetings. There had been extensive consultations on planning applications which had taken a great

deal of time as a number of sensitive proposals had arisen. The Council had met senior officers of Chester City Council to discuss a range of matters including planning and relationships between the City and the Parish Council.

The Council had continued in membership of a wide range of outside bodies including the Cheshire Community Council, the CPRE, the Mid Cheshire Footpaths Society, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils for which Guiden Sutton had again provided both the Chairman (Cllr Armitage) and Honorary Secretary (The Clerk) of the Chester Area Meeting. In addition, Cllr Armitage had served as a member of the Association's Executive Committee, chairman of their Policy committee and as a representative to the Chester District Public Transport Liaison Committee.

The Chairman had continued as the Council's representative on the governing body of the primary school and Cllr Gartland as the representative to the Village Hall management committee. Members of the Council, particularly Cllr Armitage, had played an active role in supporting the Millennium Group.

Members and the Clerk had attended a wide range of conferences and meetings held by Cheshire County Council, Chester City Council, Cheshire Community Council, the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils and the Cheshire Police Authority. These meetings brought valuable information to the Parish to assist the Council in the conduct of its business and enabled Members to make useful contacts with Members and officers of other authorities.

A number of significant issues had been under consideration or review. These included the new Local Plan for the whole of the Chester District with its proposal for new policies to control development in Green Belt villages such as Guiden Sutton, which would be fully included in the Green Belt for the first time, together with the County Council's Structure Plan, which would guide planning in the county up to 2011.

There had been consultations on a wide variety of strategic issues which would affect the Parish including the new Cheshire Local Transport Plan and possible policies for the future of waste disposal in the county.

The Council had been active in making representations to the Government in support of concerns within the community. Clarification had been sought of the Government's position as to the payment of benefits in cash at local post offices, given this accounted for 40 per cent of their business and would threaten their viability if withdrawn. The Council had been assured by Mrs C M Russell MP that the option of payment in cash would continue.

The Council had been pressing the Government to grant Parish Councils a statutory right to make representations on applications for goods vehicle operating centre licences given the impact of such operations on the local road network.

An assurance had been received that contrary to a press report, the Government had no proposals to abolish parish councils.

On finance, the Council had continued with its policy of deficit budgeting to return balances to the community and this process was now largely completed. Annual expenditure had been rising in recent years as additional services and facilities had been provided and other costs had increased. As a result, in 2000/2001, the Council's expenditure had been budgeted at £10,760 compared with £10,375 in 1999/00.

The Council had been increasing the precept to more closely match income and expenditure and to avoid an unduly large increase in its proportion of the council tax as reserves were exhausted. As a result, the precept for 2000/2001 had been set at £9,545, compared with £9,091 in 1999/00, with the additional commitments being funded from the remaining reserves. The increase in the precept of 5 per cent was thought to be below the national average.

At present, the precept was approximately £1.25 per month for an average house in the Parish. The Council believed this represented good value for money but remained fully committed to spending council tax payers money wisely and to securing grants towards expenditure wherever this was possible.

A wide range of issues had been dealt with during the year. The Council was very aware of its responsibility to speak out for local interests, for example in responding to the consultations previously mentioned and this was reflected in the very detailed monthly agenda. All issues, both large and small, were

considered equally.

With local planning, a number of difficult issues had arisen and the Council had, as always, taken a great deal of care to ensure that all aspects were carefully considered and fairly discussed before a decision was reached. It was worth noting the Council was also consulted on planning applications on or near the parish boundaries where these would affect Guilden Sutton

The Council continued to believe that new regulations concerning the Council's audit, introduced in 1997, were unnecessarily complex when applied to the expenditure incurred by councils the size of Guilden Sutton. This had been raised nationally in view of the substantially increased audit fees which had resulted. These amounted to almost £700 in Guilden Sutton's case for 1998/99, representing 7 per cent of the total budget, compared with 0.1 per cent for local government as a whole.

As a result, a pilot scheme had been introduced allowing the Council to select its own auditors through competitive tendering. This process was nearing completion and the Council was hopeful that savings could be achieved.

A number of local road matters had arisen during the year. The Council continued to be disappointed that a number of motorists exiting Guilden Sutton Lane at the junction with the A 41 ignored the intention that the gap in the central reservation was suitable to allow only one vehicle at a time to turn right into the main road, causing problems for themselves, approaching traffic and the vehicle already waiting. The Council hoped that all motorists using the junction would see the sense of exercising a little patience given the previous accident record.

For the first time for a number of years, a concern had arisen over street lighting when a fault affecting a light on the Fox Cover steps had remained unattended despite representations. Unfortunately during this period, a pedestrian had suffered injuries whilst negotiating the steps in darkness.

Members maintained a close interest in local bus services and Cllr Mrs Astbury had continued as the local bus user contact. The future of the current experimental Sunday bus service through the parish had been considered by the Chester District Public Transport Liaison Committee and in view of poor patronage and high journey costs it was likely that when next discussed it would

be discontinued.

This would be disappointing to the Council and to City Cllr Boughton who had both strongly supported the initiative and had urged all local residents to patronise the service as its future depended solely on a 'use it or lose it' basis.

The new direct service from Ince/Elton to Chester Business Park, which served the Parish, had been welcomed, although at times aspects of its performance were unsatisfactory.

The Council was pleased the parish playing field, which was rented from a private landowner, continued to be a well used and valuable village amenity. The sale of Meadow Lea Farm had been seen as a possible avenue for purchasing an appropriate area of land but unfortunately the area concerned had been excluded from the sale.

Guiden Sutton remained deficient in all aspects of open space provision and any improvement in the position hinged crucially on open space becoming available. The Council would be pleased to hear from landowners who may be able to help. The City Council would then be able to assist with help and advice as to the funding of any scheme.

The children's play area had continued to be popular. Regular safety inspections had been carried out both by RoSPA and by the City Council which dealt with any repairs or maintenance which might be necessary at the Parish Council's expense. The Council was very grateful to the City Council for offering this help. In addition, Members of the Council also carried out a basic weekly visual inspection of the play area.

Litter continued to be a problem and the Council's contractor was paid to give the play area weekly attention. A litter bin was available very close by and the Council would hope to encourage children and their parents to dispose of their litter in this manner.

A number of possible initiatives existed to improve the playground and the surrounding area and Cllrs Arditti and Patten were reviewing options.

Public footpaths were seen by the Council as an important part of village life and Members were very pleased at the great deal of hard work which was carried out by the voluntary Parish

Footpaths Group. The Parish Paths Warden, Mr Stephen Armstrong, was to be congratulated on its achievements.

The Council had, in the past, expressed its pleasure that action was being taken to protect and improve Cheshire's fast disappearing ponds under a scheme organised by Liverpool John Moores University. Cllr Gartland acted as Parish Pond Warden although the future funding of the project was in some doubt.

The Council believed that trees play a vital part in the village environment and would wish to thank Cllr Gartland, who was also the Parish Tree Warden, for his efforts.

Progress had at least been achieved with the long awaited improvements to the access to the primary school from Hill Top Road although it was disappointing to note the newly planted Cherries were suffering vandalism. It was intended the damaged trees would be replaced.

The Council's newsletter continued to appear, normally on a monthly basis and Members would be pleased to receive comments as to its value in helping the Council's communications within the Parish. Following an approach to a youth group within the village, a presentation had been made to improve contact between the Council and this age group. It had been interesting and encouraging to note the group concerned did not see that any problem existed.

Due to its proximity to the urban area, the Parish suffered from a great deal of indiscriminate dumping, particularly in Belle Vue Lane and Guilden Sutton Lane. This was probably at its worst now than at any time in recent memory and the Council was grateful to City Cllr Bailey and the City Council for their help in having litter removed on an all too regular basis.

The Parish had again entered the Cheshire Best Kept Village Competition and clean sweep campaigns had been held monthly from April to September with the help of the City Council which had provided collection bags and litter pickers.

The Council was somewhat disappointed at the outcome. Although marks were no worse than average, the Parish had finished 12th from 14 in its class. There were some disappointing aspects which clearly needed to be improved although helpfully, the judges believed the Parish had the potential to score highly.

The Council were hopeful of improved results in 2000 and encouraged all residents to join in the clean sweeps held on the first Saturday of each month by caring for their own local surroundings.

The Council remained concerned at the degree of dog fouling within the village, particularly on the footpaths leading to the primary school, the dingle footpath, Heath Bank and Church Lane. This was a totally unnecessary problem and the Council would hope that the small minority of dog owners concerned would feel more able to play their part in tackling the problem. The penalties for dog fouling had been increased and the legislation made more comprehensive which the Council welcomed.

Tipping in the dingle at the rear of Oaklands continued to be a concern. Such action was deprecated by the Council which believed that residents should appreciate the good environment the village was fortunate to enjoy.

Policing of the parish had been affected by the retirement of PC Pye and changes in the arrangements for the policing of the rural area. Beats were now coterminous with District Council ward boundaries, which the Council welcomed, and PC Richard Tack had been allocated to Christleton Ward. PC Tack was familiar with the area and had already made contact with the Council.

Improvements to the memorial garden had been made in co-operation with the adjoining occupier.

The possibility of sewage problems affecting Oaklands had remained under review although no further serious instances had been brought to the Council's attention.

The Council was pleased the Millennium Group, which it supported, was playing such an active role in ensuring the Millennium was marked in an appropriate manner and had contributed a panel to the Millennial Hanging.

With the approach of the millennium the Council continued to embrace information technology. A significant proportion of the Clerk's contact with the City and Council councils was carried out through e mail and under the leadership of the Chairman, an Internet site had been developed.

A review of the Cheshire County Council electoral divisions had been concluded to which the Council had contributed. The Council was pleased the Gowy division remained substantially unchanged.

The Council recognised that at a future date, change might be proposed for Parish boundaries. In some cases this may be desirable for Guiden Sutton but the Council would not support change where this did not have the agreement of the occupiers concerned.

Civic duties had included the laying of the customary wreath on Remembrance Sunday in memory of the fallen and attendance at the Right Worshipful The Lord Mayor of Chester's Civic Service. The Council also assisted in the local administration of the Lord Mayor's Christmas Parcel Appeal.

The Council would wish to thank the City and County Councils, the local City and County Councillors and Mrs C M Russell MP for their help and support during the year. The Chairman also paid tribute to the Council for their hard work during the last 12 months and believed the Parish was fortunate that Members had felt able to come forward with their time to serve the community.

Reporting on local planning, Cllr Hughes said that 24 new planning applications had been considered by the Council during the year, compared with 27 in the previous year although an above average number had been consultations on neighbouring proposals in adjoining parishes.

The Council had dealt with all of these keenly and assiduously and had always consulted the applicant and adjoining occupiers. Observations were reported to the next Parish Council meeting, where possible, where a full discussion by Members could take place. If this was not possible due to time considerations, a discussion with one or more other Members was the rule, before a decision was made on the comments to be made to the City Council.

The Parish Council was very aware of its responsibilities on local planning issues and had decided that all important or contentious applications should be considered and discussed by as wide an audience of Members as possible. It was not thought to be fair or reasonable for a single Member to take the responsibility for putting forward the Council's views on his or her own in these

cases.

In addition, the Council constantly reviewed its practices for dealing with applications to ensure these were as thorough and fair as possible. pm 00 04

Many of the applications received by the Council were straightforward and did not have implications beyond their own area. These were commented on by the Council and passed to the City Council to be determined, usually to be confirmed by officers under their delegated powers. The following applications had given Members more food for thought.

95/1046 The Steadings (formerly The Byatts). This was a long term, high quality conversion of the former farm buildings to provide 8 no dwellings and associated facilities. Each dwelling was being constructed to the purchaser's individual requirements which had resulted in a series of detailed amendments to the original proposal. The Council was keen to have an understanding of the progress of the development and was grateful to the architect for the opportunity of a site visit.

99/589 telecommunications mast for Cellnet, Guilden Sutton Lane. The Council had previously objected to a proposal, subsequently withdrawn, for a 25 metre telecommunications mast within the reservoir site. The proposal had again come forward, recommended for approval, at a planning authority meeting at which a similar mast in the Green Belt at Waverton had been listed for refusal. With the assistance at short notice of the Ward Members and lobbying by the Clerk, the application had been refused against the officers' advice. Subsequently, an inspector had allowed an appeal and the mast had recently been constructed.

98/1353. This application, which had arisen during the previous year, had envisaged the construction of a dwelling within the existing curtilage of a property in School Lane. The Council had objected on green belt grounds but had indicated they would not be minded to oppose an appropriate extension of the existing dwelling suitable to the applicant's needs. The planning authority had refused the proposal but subsequently agreed an extension (99/1031) to the existing dwelling.

99/56, 57, 181. These three applications involved significant leisure developments in Mickle Trafford, one for 120 caravans

and 60 tents. The Council had objected to this latter application, which had yet to be determined, on green belt grounds.

99/641 signing for Vicars Cross Golf Club. The Council had been consulted on this proposal for two direction signs on the A 51 for the benefit of visiting golfers. One, close to the junction with Wicker Lane, had been thought to present a risk that cars would be directed into Wicker Lane to the inconvenience of all concerned. Revised positioning had been agreed but the eventual solution had been to incorporate revised wording as to the location of the access to the club.

99/829 and 99/900. Both these applications had been for substantial extensions to large dwellings on Oaklands. Careful consideration had been given to their impact on adjoining properties and to the need for conditions to preserve single family occupancy.

99/1128, Meadow Lea Farm, Mickle Trafford. The Council had not objected to an application by the new owners for an extension to the stockyard but had raised concerns as to possible contracting activities. An application by the owners for a goods vehicle operating centre licence for two no vehicles had not been resisted on the basis the vehicles were solely for uses incidental to the operation of the farm but the Council had expressed the view that an application in connection with contracting activities would have been opposed.

The Council was concerned at the impact of large agricultural traffic within the Parish and had held a meeting with the planning authority to discuss policies in this area.

99/1225, proposed granny flat. This was a substantial extension on Oaklands, the implications of which had been carefully considered.

99/1336, change of condition attached to planning approval. The Council had opposed this application which would have removed a condition concerning the occupation for residential purposes of the outbuilding of a property on School Lane. Members believed the proposal would have led to over intensive use of the site which had sub standard access to the highway. The application had been refused by the planning authority. It was understood an appeal may be lodged.

99/1355. This extension to a property in Church Lane had resulted in guidelines for normal off street parking provision being breached. The views of the highway authority in cases where appropriate provision cannot be made had been carefully considered. Concerns had also raised as to the proximity of a proposed new porch at the dwelling to the boundary of the property at a point where Church Lane was extremely narrow.

Wilding Business Estate. The Council was pleased to have informal discussions with the company on proposals for further improvements to the site involving adaptations to an existing building to provide small office units.

Castle Cement, Flintshire. The Council had thought it appropriate to make representations as to the control and monitoring of emissions from the 110 metre stack of a proposed new kiln. The application had been approved by the local planning authority but called in by the National Assembly for Wales.

00/121 Roseville, Belle Vue Lane. This proposal involved the demolition of an existing bungalow and its replacement by a large dwelling to which the Council had objected due to its impact on the street scene and on adjoining properties. An amended application had been received which sought to address the concerns of the Council.

A number of enforcement issues had been considered by the Council during the year and appropriate action taken.

Planning was by far the most contentious issue which the Council had to comment upon and represented the most significant area of discussion between the City Council and parish councils in Chester as Members frequently felt that reasonable opinions were totally disregarded. Guilden Sutton had taken the lead in seeking an improved understanding with the planning authority and significant progress had been achieved although more work remained to be done.

The majority of applications were straightforward and readily agreed with the planning authority. But there were areas where continued dialogue was important to ensure an understanding of the background.

Reports considered by the Council on local planning related matters had included:

City Council policy for play and open space provision in new housing developments.

Chester District Landscape Assessment and Guidelines.

Responding to planning applications - CPRE.

How to influence planning permissions – Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils.

Referring to strategic planning, Cllr Armitage said the County Council's new structure plan to guide development in Cheshire up to 2011 had now been adopted. This was the major strategic plan covering the whole of the county and the Parish Council had been mainly concerned to protect the integrity of the green belt in and around Guilden Sutton. The Council had been pleased that so far as the position was understood, there was no intention to take any new Green Belt land for development in Chester before 2011 although this would exclude the new park and ride site at Hoole Village which was seen as justifying a breach. There was however to be a review of green belt boundaries throughout the county to accommodate development after 2011 and possibly before. Continued vigilance would be essential to protect our local environment.

The Chester District Local Plan was the first local plan to be produced by the City for the whole of Chester district. The Parish Council had again been keen to protect the Green Belt and the distinctive character of Guilden Sutton which still followed the intentions laid down in the original development plan of the late 1960s.

This firmly recognises the rural environment of the village and the Council continued to be anxious that the land between Guilden Sutton and Chester should not be developed with the parish being subsumed into the greater urban Chester envelope. This point had been made strongly to both the County and City Councils in the preparation of their plans.

The local plan, which was at present being considered by a public inquiry, contained new proposals for controlling further development in villages such as Guilden Sutton. These had the support of the Council and would limit development to no more than one or two dwellings on otherwise built up frontages. Areas

of open space within the village which should be specifically protected had also been put forward and the Council was pleased that generally its proposals had been accepted, for example the parish playing field in Guilden Sutton Lane. A notable exception was the orchard on School Lane which it was proposed should be excluded from protection as an important green space and this had been vigorously resisted at the public inquiry. An application for development there had already been refused.

The plan contained proposals for future policies to promote cycling. Although the Council was keen to see safe cycling routes from Guilden Sutton to Chester and Upton County High School, Members were less clear about their support for measures to provide cycling routes through the rural area.

There were particular concerns where these included the possible upgrading of public footpaths. A proposal to develop a route from Guilden Sutton across the Gowy Valley, which had been opposed by the landowners, had been deleted from the plan.

So far as the urban area was concerned, the Council was anxious to link Guilden Sutton first to the Mickle Trafford - Deeside transport system and then to Upton High School. The former would require the creation of a new cycleway to Mickle Trafford and the Council was hopeful that a scheme would be possible, starting at Park Farm on Guilden Sutton Lane. The latter would most probably be achieved by means of an access from the cycleway at Mannings Lane South.

There had been little progress with the Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan which had become the target for the 'scrap the map' campaign although the Council recognised that in reality the subject was far more complex. The County Council was, however, obliged to form a plan for the disposal of the ever increasing volumes of waste produced by society and was currently consulting to gather peoples' views as to the way forward. The Parish Council was keen to see more recycling in order to reduce the volume of waste going to landfill.

Strategic planning reports received by the Council during the year for consultation or information had included:

Our Waste, Our Challenge.

Joint Waste Management Strategy.

Local Environment Agency Plan - Dee.

Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan.

Cheshire Structure Plan 2011 - draft modifications.

Rural England discussion document.

Sustainable rural tourism in Chester.

Rural Housing – Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils.

Household Growth - CPRE.

Cheshire Rural Forum - minutes.

Future of Agriculture in Cheshire - CPRE seminar details.

CPRE annual reports for Chester and Cheshire.

Reporting on Public Transport, the Clerk said that Cllr Mrs Astbury had continued as Local Bus User Contact.

The most important recent matter 12 months ago had been the withdrawal by Arrowebrook of the C39 'Mickle Trafford Shopper', a commercial service which by virtue of running down Hoole Road was the only public transport link from Guilden Sutton to the GPs, dentist, optician and pharmacy in Hoole. This service had been sustaining unacceptable losses but it was hoped it might be possible for an alternative service to be introduced on a circular route serving a number of rural areas. The Council had been pleased it had been possible to reinstate the service in the Autumn.

The hourly Sunday bus service to and from Chester, introduced on a trial basis in 1998 by diverting the C 84 service to the Potteries through the village, continued to run despite indications it would be ceased in due course due to low patronage.

The express peak hour service from Ince and Elton to Chester Business Park via Guilden Sutton and the Southerly by pass was a welcome addition to public transport in the Parish although its

performance had given rise to concerns so far as passenger information was concerned.

Improved information was also being sought as to the 1710 ex Chester Bus Exchange which although serving the village was shown as a service to Kelsall to which it proceeded forward.

The Council endeavoured to obtain accurate timetable information about services to and from the village although it was not consulted by the operators and the position was not as clear as it desired. During the year, bus stop posts in the Parish had been renewed and it was disappointing that the County Council had yet to reinstate the timetable information thereon despite requests to do so.

The Parish Council was fortunate to be represented on the Chester District Public Transport Liaison Committee by Cllr Armitage which allowed concerns to be raised with County and City Council Members and with transport co-ordination officers.

Public transport reports received by the Council during the year for consultation or information had included:

Rural Transport Partnership

Chester District Public Transport liaison committee - agenda and minutes.

Chester district community car scheme.

Chester district dial a ride service.

A better role for bus travel.

Reporting on highways, Cllr Fisher said the A 41/Guilden Sutton Lane local safety scheme had succeeded in reducing the number of injury and other accidents at this difficult junction although they had not been eliminated entirely. Concern had been expressed at the actions of a minority of drivers emerging from Guilden Sutton Lane when the space in the central reservation was already occupied by a waiting vehicle. This was a totally unnecessary manoeuvre and placed both waiting and approaching traffic at risk.

The replacement in the Autumn of the gas main on Guilden Sutton Lane and School Lane had greatly exercised the Council due to the lack of advance consultation and the standard of reinstatement following completion of the works. Both these aspects had been vigorously pursued with Transco. Concern remained at the location of the posting box opposite the old school. It was thought this had been displaced as a temporary measure and strong representations had been made to Royal Mail for it to be returned to its original position adjoining the lay by in order to avoid the traffic hazards which had ensued.

Traffic conditions on Wicker Lane had continued to concern the Council. A count by the highway authority in the vicinity of the vicarage did not substantiate the Council's anxieties and a request for a more representative count closer to the A 51 had been refused. There was, however, little prospect of a weight limit being secured as the majority of HCVs and similar traffic using the road were travelling to local addresses.

A complaint by a resident had been progressed at a site meeting facilitated by City Cllr Boughton and attended by the Council. Improved signing had been suggested by the highway authority to improve the situation, together with other measures.

Following concern as to the condition of Belle Vue Lane, resurfacing had been carried out. Similarly the highway authority had been persuaded to deal with severe potholing which had occurred at the junction of Guilden Sutton Lane and the A 41. Public Footpath no 2 had been resurfaced.

The egress of water across the carriageway at the bridges on Guilden Sutton Lane and Belle Vue Lane had yet to be rectified. Works were in progress to deal with pollution which had led to the unacceptable condition of the ditch on the north side of Belle Vue Lane.

The parking of minibuses in Arrowcroft Road collecting pupils attending out of school clubs continued to be monitored.

The request to the highway authority for the provision of chevron signs at the entrance to The Byatts remained outstanding. New or replacement street nameplates had been secured at a number of locations. Following representations to the Dee Valley Group, an area of cobbles adjoining the churchyard which had been disturbed by works had been reinstated.

The Council were grateful to City Cllr Boughton for action which had ensured the main roads in the Parish would continue to be gritted in bad weather following a proposal the service should be withdrawn.

The County Council minor improvements programme continued to include works at Wicker Lane in the vicinity of the golf club together with realignment at the junction of Wicker Lane and Church Lane and at the junction of Wicker Lane and School Lane although these remained a low priority.

The Council was pleased to note the District Engineer was seeking funds for maintenance schemes on Wicker Lane, Belle Vue Lane and Arrowcroft Road although these had yet to be allocated.

The Council was consulted by the County Council on the new Cheshire Local Transport Plan which set out future policies and priorities for transport in the county. The Council had supported the view there should be two distinct road networks, one comprising motorways and trunk roads, the other roads within the rural area where speed limits should generally be 40mph and 30 mph through communities.

The Council had contributed to a survey of traffic problems in the rural area by the CPRE. pm 00 08

The agenda and minutes of the Highways and Transportation LJC for Chester were considered by the Council. The Council was fortunate that City Cllr Boughton was a spokesman and able to raise matters on the Council's behalf.

The Council was proposing to improve the environment of the village by refurbishing items of street furniture including public seats and signposts.

Highways and transportation reports received by the Council during the year for consultation or information had included:

Commuter plans in Cheshire.

Cheshire local transport plan.

Future maintenance of Cheshire Railings.

Drink Drive campaign.

Speeding campaign.

Strategic Maintenance Rolling Programme 2000/01 - local proposals.

Referring to environmental services, Cllr Gartland said a wide range of matters had arisen.

Concern continued to be expressed at the degree of dog fouling within the Parish and particularly on footpath no 2 and the access paths to the primary school. This was to be deprecated. An additional bin for the reception of canine faeces was to be provided at the hollows.

The Council was most grateful to Messrs A V Wilding for their continued financial support to the Best Kept Village competition. Their most recent donation had been applied towards the cost of litter picking equipment.

The Council was pleased it had been possible to progress improvements in the vicinity of the play area and at the junction of this school access with Hill Top Road. This included the provision of additional safety fencing to protect children from riding into the highway.

The Council had continued to support the work of the Cheshire Landscape Trust which administered the Parish Tree Warden scheme from which the Parish benefitted.

Further mass planting of daffodils had taken place. A photographic record of existing planting had been compiled in order to identify where further planting could most usefully take place. Consultations as to further tree preservation orders had taken place with the City Council.

With the co-operation of the adjoining occupier, improvements had been secured to the memorial garden with the planting of suitable species of container grown shrubs.

The Council continued to support the Pond Life Project and Cllr Gartland was pleased to act as Parish Pond Warden.

The City Council amenity cleansing schedule was supplemented as necessary by a locally appointed contractor who also scavenged the playing field, play area, parish car park and other public areas on a regular basis.

Reporting on recreation services, Cllr Arditti said a number of possible initiatives existed to improve the children's playground and the surrounding area for which options were being reviewed. Work had already been completed to open up the front aspect of the playground. The possibility of an enhanced maintenance regime in co-operation with users was being considered.

The annual safety inspection had been transferred to RoSPA which had also carried out a risk assessment. This had been carefully considered by the Council and appropriate measures taken.

There was concern the parish playing field was being used for the exercising of dogs and an appropriate notice had been displayed.

Reductions in the hours of the mobile library had been challenged by the Council. The Council was always disappointed to see reductions in services to the rural area but a survey by the library had showed very little if any use being made of the service during the period concerned.

The Council had been pleased the Footpath Group had been able to replace stiles on a number of paths by kissing gates. The successful Parish Paths Partnership Scheme, in which the Parish participated, had concluded and the County Council had been thanked for its support which had led, through the Footpaths Group, to a significant improvement in the local footpath network.

The Council had considered the annual report of the Mid Cheshire Footpaths Society.

Reporting on the Millennium, Cllr Armitage said the Council had continued to support the Millennium Group and had contributed a panel to the millennial hanging. The Group had been most grateful to the Council for the provision of a pump priming loan to meet advance costs in connection with the Village Fair.

Publications had been considered relating to the Awards for All

lottery grant scheme and the supply of millennium beacons.

Reporting on policing, the Chairman said the Council had been represented at a seminar during which the Chief Constable had reaffirmed the Police commitment to the rural area although it was noted changes in the delivery of policing were inevitable. Within the Chester rural area, police officer cover was now available during extended hours. Guilden Sutton was now policed by the beat officer allocated to Christleton Ward who was part of a team based at Mickle Trafford police house.

Policing reports received by the Council during the year for consultation or information had included:

Chester Police Forum - agenda and minutes.

Cheshire Police Authority annual report.

Cheshire Police annual report.

Cheshire Policing Plan.

Reporting on Local Government, Cllr Hughes referred to the Council's links with the following organisations:

(a) Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils.

Cllr Armitage was a member of the Executive Committee and chairman of the Policy Committee. He was also chairman of the Chester Area Meeting of which the Clerk was Honorary Secretary and the Association's representative to the Chester District Public Transport liaison committee.

Efforts by the Association at County level and nationally to secure a reduction in audit fees had continued to be strongly supported. It was hoped the new self selection procedure would secure a reduction in the level of fee applicable.

The Council had been represented at the Association's annual meeting.

(b) Chester City Council.

The Council were grateful to City Cllrs B J Bailey and J R

Boughton and City Council officers for their continued support and co-operation.

The Council had been represented at the annual Parish Partnership reception.

Members and the Clerk had attended meetings of the Local Panel covering the Parish established as part of the City Council's 'New Ways of Working'.

A presentation had been made to the Council on the proposed transfer of local authority housing stock. The arrangements for consultation with tenants had been welcomed.

The Council were pleased the Parish had been included in a tour by the Talking Computers Roadshow.

City Council reports not previously referred to received by the Council during the year for consultation or information had included:

Economic Development Statement.

Annual Plan of Action.

Anti Social Behaviour Orders.

Performance Indicators 1999/00.

New Ways of Working.

(c) Cheshire County Council.

The Council was grateful to County Cllr N J Fitton and County Council officers for their continued support and co-operation.

The Council had been represented at the annual Town and Parish Councils conference.

County Council reports not previously referred to received by the Council during the year for consultation or information had included:

Best Value Local Performance Plan.

Local Councils Charter.

Economic Development Statement.

Community Care Plan 1999/00.

Spending Priorities.

Annual Report.

Eco Audit scheme.

(d) Cheshire Fire Brigade.

The Council had been consulted on the Brigade's draft performance plan.

Presenting his report as a primary school governor, Cllr Fisher said the school had enjoyed another satisfactory year with pupils achieving excellent test results.

3. Matters arising.

(i) Mass planting. Mrs B Antrobus said the Parish had looked delightful in the Spring and the bulbs planted within the Parish by the Council had been a great success. Mrs Antrobus was thanked for her comment.

(ii) Water supply, Wicker Lane. Mrs B Antrobus referred to a further interruption of supplies which she believed resulted from the use of the road by heavy vehicles. Cllr Patten believed there had been four interruptions in as many months at different locations. Cllr Armitage suggested the problem may be due to heavy vehicles over riding the verge and compressing the supply. He said a letter should be sent to the Dee Valley Group asking what action was intended to prevent similar recurrences in the future.

(iii) Local Government. County Cllr Fitton referred to speculation as to the abolition of parish councils and believed that Members should remain vigilant. A Local Government Bill included provisions for principal authorities to delegate decisions to local

bodies such as area committees and local panels. He suggested the City Council should be asked what they intended to do about local panels and their possible involvement in the planning process. Cllr Hughes believed the matter should be raised with the Cheshire Association. Cllr Armitage was clear there was no need for neighbourhood forums where parish councils already existed. He believed the matter should be raised through the Association.

Cllr Armitage referred to the expected Rural White Paper in the Autumn which he believed should be discussed at a meeting involving the City Council and Parishes in order that Parishes could be better informed.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Antrobus and County Cllr Fitton for their contributions. The meeting concluded at 7.32 pm.