

## Guiden Sutton Parish Council

### Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in at Guiden Sutton Village Hall on 13 May 2002.

Chairman: Councillor D Hughes.

Apologies: City Councillor B J Bailey.

Present: Councillors Arditti, Armitage, Astbury, Fisher, Hughes, Paterson, Whitehouse.

In attendance: County Councillor J E Burke, City Councillor J R Boughton, the Reverend Dr Mark Hart and four members of the public .

1 Minutes. The minutes of the annual parish meeting held on Monday 14 May 2001 were proposed by Councillor Armitage, seconded by Councillor Astbury and agreed as a correct record.

#### 2. Annual reports.

The Clerk presented a précis of the Council's annual reports which were accepted and attached in full to these minutes.

The Chairman thanked Members, county and city councillors and the Clerk, who had now served for 20 years, for their support during year.

#### 3 Questions from electors.

An elector referred to a problem of ivy affecting the boundary fence of a property on Old Hall Park and to difficulties arising from vehicles parking in the wrong direction on Guiden Sutton Lane.

An elector requested details of the breakdown of the Council's budget.

An elector believed the general appearance of the village had improved but referred to the condition of the verge planting adjoining the steps from Fox Cover to Church Lane. This would be referred to the City Council.

County Councillor Burke indicated that subject to the approval of the local joint committee for highways and transportation, new signing and lining would be provided at the approach to the parish playing field on Guiden Sutton Lane. This was welcomed.

The meeting concluded at 7.55pm.

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## Guiden Sutton Parish Council

### Annual reports, 2001/2002

#### Chairman's report.

2001/02 has been an extremely busy period for the Parish Council on behalf of the local community.

There has been one change to the Council's membership with Councillor Michael Gartland resigning towards the end of the year. Mr Gartland, who is continuing as the Parish Tree Warden, has been thanked for his valuable service to the Council and to the community. The vacancy has been advertised and if no poll is claimed, the Council will fill the vacancy by co-option. Any member of the Council, or the Clerk, will be pleased to hear of any member of the electorate who wishes to be considered in this event. The new Councillor will serve for the remainder of the current quadrennial which expires in May, 2003.

The Council was pleased to congratulate a former member of the Council, City Councillor J R Boughton, on his election as President of the Rotary Club of Chester. County Councillor J E Burke was congratulated on his election as County Councillor for the Gowy division in succession to County Councillor N J Fitton. Mrs C M Russell was congratulated on her re-election as MP for the City of Chester.

Earlier in the year Councillor Gartland had retired as the Council's representative to the Village Hall management committee and had been replaced by Councillor Paterson. The Council had been saddened to hear of the death of a former chairman, Mr P W Hughes.

Monthly meetings have been held throughout the year, apart from August, together with site meetings. There have been extensive consultations on planning applications which have taken a great deal of time as a number of sensitive proposals have arisen. The Council has continued to meet senior officers of Chester City Council to discuss a range of matters.

It was reported at this meeting last year that the Council had arranged three highly successful public meetings to discuss issues of current interest. It was said then that the Council would welcome suggestions from the electorate as to other issues which might be aired in this way and that invitation is still open

A period of public speaking time is also available prior to meetings of the Council which enables members of the electorate to put forward views directly to members. A number of members of the public have taken this opportunity.

In addition to the introduction of public speaking time prior to each meeting, the Council agreed a series of experimental surgeries held on the first Saturday of each month and attended by two members between 10:00am and 10:30am. Although the numbers taking advantage of these surgeries have been small, the issues which have been raised have warranted action by the Council. The Council would welcome comments as to whether a Saturday morning is the most

suitable time for these surgeries

During the year, arrangements were introduced under which individual members now lead on specific aspects of the Council's business as follows:

Councillor Arditti: Leisure

Councillor Armitage: Policy, Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils, National Association of Local Councils, Standards.

Councillor Astbury: Public transport, Police.

Councillor Fisher: Strategic planning, major highway schemes, education, fire, Cheshire County Council

Vacancy: Cheshire Landscape Trust, trees and hedges, memorial garden, Chester City Council

Councillor Hughes: Development control, finance, community safety.

Councillor Paterson: Health, social services, parish highways, Village Hall

Councillor Whitehouse: Cheshire Community Council, CPRE, environmental services.

The Council has continued in membership of a wide range of outside bodies including the Cheshire Community Council, the CPRE, the Mid Cheshire Footpath Society, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils for which Guiden Sutton has again provided both the Chairman (Councillor Armitage) and Honorary Secretary (the Clerk) of the Chester Area Meeting. Councillor Armitage also serves as a member of the association's executive committee, as chairman of the policy committee and as a representative to the Chester District Public Transport liaison committee. In addition he is vice chairman of the Rural Transport Partnership and during the year was elected as the Parish Councils' representative for Chester district on the City Council's new ethics and standards committee.

Councillor Fisher has continued as the Council's representative on the governing body of the primary school.

Members and the Clerk have also attended a wide range of conferences and meetings held by Cheshire County Council, Chester City Council, Cheshire Community Council, the Cheshire Planning Forum, the CPRE and the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils. These meetings bring valuable information to the parish to assist the Council in the conduct of its business and enable members to make useful contacts with members and officers of other authorities.

A number of significant issues have 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 Guilden Sutton. The Council believes that continued vigilance to protect the Green Belt is essential, particularly in the light of continued representations to the City Council for land at Guilden Sutton Lane to be allocated as a business park.

There have also been consultations on a wide variety of strategic issues which in one way or another affect the parish.

The Council does not hesitate to make representations to the Government in support of concerns within the community.

On finance, the Council has continued with its policy of deficit budgeting to return balances to the community. Annual expenditure has been rising in recent years as additional services and facilities have been provided and other costs have also increased. For 2002/03 the budget has increased marginally to £11,110 having been held at £10,760, in the previous two years. The increase, however, is only due to the proposed provision of an additional public seat funded by a generous grant from the Millennium Group. The Council has been increasing its precept to more closely match income and expenditure and the precept for 2002/03 has been set at £10,300 compared with £9,925 in 2001/02, with the additional commitments being funded from the remaining reserves. The increase in the precept of less than four per cent is thought to compare favourably with that of other authorities.

At present, the precept is approximately £1.35 per month for an average band D house in the parish. The Council believes this represents good value for money but remains fully committed to spending Council taxpayers' money wisely and to securing grants towards expenditure wherever this is possible. In 2001/02 the Council was again successful in attracting valuable external funding for local improvements.

A wide range of issues have been dealt with during the year. The Council is very aware of its responsibility to speak out for local interests, for example in responding to consultations and this is reflected in its very detailed monthly agenda. All issues, both large and small, are considered equally.

With local planning, there were again a number of difficult issues and the Council has, 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 is also worth noting that the Council is consulted on planning applications on or near the parish boundaries where these would affect Guilden Sutton. Although none arose during the year, the Council objected to an application for development in the Green Belt in Mickle Trafford on its own initiative.

The Council has benefited from a pilot scheme allowing the appointment of independent private sector auditors, referred to at this meeting last year, which has resulted in a reduced audit fee. New light touch audit requirements are also now in place although it is not yet known whether these will bring a further reduction in costs as there is a requirement for the Council to appoint an independent person to act as its internal auditor, a task previously carried out by a member of the Council. I should stress that the new arrangements affect only the detail in which the final accounts are presented and not the testing of the probity of the Council's financial procedures. Indeed members of the Council now have a greater role in ensuring that adequate procedures

are in place.

A number of local highway matters have arisen during the year. The Council remains disappointed that a number of motorists exiting Guiden Sutton Lane at the junction with the A 41 ignore the intention that the gap in the central reservation is 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 hopes that all motorists using the junction will see the sense of exercising a little patience given the previous accident record which has not been entirely eradicated

The long awaited improvement to the footway from Fox Cover to Church Lane has been finally completed with the 1st Guiden Sutton Scouts carrying out a landscaping works as a community project under the supervision of the City Council's Parks and Open Spaces Manager

Street lighting faults continue to be reported although in the last 12 months these have been fewer than usual. The Council would be pleased to hear from residents if they encounter any difficulty in reporting these themselves to the street lighting authority.

Representations made during the previous year to the Dee Valley Group as to the frequency of bursts on Wicker Lane elicited an assurance that the burst record would be monitored and appropriate action taken if necessary

Members maintain a close interest in local bus services and Councillor Mrs Astbury has continued as the local bus user contact. The future of the Sunday bus service through the parish remains in some doubt and it is thought to be likely that it could be discontinued at some point. This would be disappointing to the Council and to City Councillor John Boughton who both strongly supported the initiative and have urged all local residents to patronise the service as its future rests solely on a 'use it or lose it' basis.

The Council is pleased the parish playing field, which is rented from a private landowner, continues to be a useful village amenity. Hopes of providing a basketball net have finally been realised, thanks to a City Council grant. Advice has been sought on measures to improve the condition of the surface of the field and this remains under review.

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

The children's play area has benefited from a significant uplift thanks to magnificent fund raising of £1,800 by interested parents and grants from Chester City Council and WREN. Regular safety inspections are carried out both by RoSPA and by the City Council which deals with any repairs or maintenance which might be necessary at the Parish Council's expense. The Council is very grateful to the City Council for offering this help. Members of the Council also carry out a basic weekly visual inspection of the play area.

Litter continues to be a problem and the Council's contractor is paid to give the play area weekly

attention. A litter bin is available very close by and the Council hopes this will encourage children and their parents to dispose of their litter in this manner.

Public footpaths are seen by the Council as an important part of village life and members are very pleased at the great deal of hard work which is carried out by the voluntary Parish Footpaths Group, although of necessity the group's activities have been somewhat curtailed during the last 12 months as a result of the foot and mouth restrictions. The Parish Paths Warden, Mr Stephen Armstrong, is to be congratulated on their achievements.

The Council has, in the past, expressed its pleasure that action is being taken to protect and improve Cheshire's fast disappearing ponds under a scheme organised by Liverpool John Moores University. Former Councillor Michael Gartland acted as Parish Pond Warden although it is feared the project may have ended due to lack of funding.

The Council believes that trees play a vital part in the village environment and would wish to thank former Councillor Gartland, who is continuing as the Parish Tree Warden, for his efforts.

The Council's newsletter continues to appear, normally on a monthly basis and members would be pleased to hear comments as to its value in helping the Council's communications within the parish.

Due to its proximity to the urban area, the parish suffers from a great deal of indiscriminate dumping of refuse, particularly in Belle Vue Lane and Guiden Sutton Lane. This continues to be a serious concern and the Council is grateful to the City Council for their help in having litter removed on an all too regular basis. The Council is funding an additional 100 hours of amenity cleansing by its contractor during the current year to help deal with this problem

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

The Council is to review the parish's entry in the Cheshire Best Kept Village Competition having again decided there was insufficient support to participate in 2002. Marks in recent years, although no worse than average, have highlighted that a number of aspects need to be improved including the extent of community involvement. Again, the Council would be pleased to hear peoples' views.

The Council remains concerned at the degree of dog fouling within the village, particularly on the footpath leading to the primary school, the dingle footpath, Heath Bank and Church Lane. This is a totally unnecessary problem and the Council hopes that the small minority of dog owners concerned would feel more able to play their part in tackling the problem.

The Council is disappointed that occasionally people are seen to be walking their dogs on the parish playing field. This is used by children and young people who should not expect to have to contend with fouling.

So far as the policing of the parish has been concerned, the Council has been most grateful to

PC Richard Tack for his involvement and support. PC Tack is in frequent contact with the Council which enables concerns to be raised and dealt with appropriately. Guilden Sutton is seen as a relatively peaceful village although there have been isolated instances of anti social behaviour in the vicinity of the play area and the Village Hall car park.

The Council continues to embrace information technology. A significant proportion of the Clerk's contact with the city and county councils and other organisations and individuals is carried out through e-mail and under the leadership of Councillor Fisher, the Council's Internet site has been further developed and offers an ever increasing range of information about the Council and the community.

Civic duties have included the laying of the customary wreath on Remembrance Sunday in memory of the fallen. The Council also assists in the local administration of the Lord Mayor's Christmas Parcel Appeal. The chairman of the Council was invited to attend the induction of the Reverend Mark Hart.

The Council would wish to thank the city and county councils, our local city and county councillors and Mrs C M Russell MP for their help and support during the year. I would also pay tribute to the Council for its hard work during the last 12 months and believe the parish is fortunate that members have felt able to come forward with their time to serve the community.

## **Local planning**

Sixteen new planning applications were considered by the Council during the year, compared with 23 in the previous year.

The Council has dealt with all of these keenly and assiduously and has always endeavoured to consult the applicant and adjoining occupiers. Observations are reported to the next Parish Council meeting, where the period for consultation allows, enabling a full discussion by members to take place. If this is not possible at least two members, preferably three are involved in recommending any response and in these circumstances, other than with minor proposals the chairman and vice-chairman are also consulted. It is not thought to be fair or reasonable for a small number of members to take the responsibility for putting the Council's views forward in these cases.

In addition, the Council constantly reviews its practices for dealing with applications to ensure these are as thorough and fair as possible.

Many of the applications received by the Council are straightforward. Observations are made and passed to the City Council to be considered in the determination of the application, usually by planning officers using delegated powers. The following applications were dealt with during the year. (NOTE Unless otherwise indicated, the Council had raised no objection and the application had been approved by the City Council):

01/0454/FUL single storey side extension, 12 Fox Cover

01/0550/TEM change of use of agricultural building to light industrial at Tile Farm, Wicker Lane.

This application, involving the possible transfer of a plastics recycling business from Tarvin, led to a large number of concerns from residents as to the planning, environmental and highways aspects of the proposal. A well attended public meeting was held prior to the Council determining its response and advice was obtained from the City Council's Development Control Manager. Although it was noted that no complaints had risen from the conduct of the operation in Tarvin, an objection was made on highway grounds and the application was refused by the City Council's planning board on this basis

01/0551/S73 removal of condition to allow the insertion of roof lights and the use of roof space, The Paddock, Church Lane

01/0738/FUL raise workshop roof on part of unit 3, Wilding Business Estate. It was noted this was a renewal application pending the submission of more modest proposals to replace the office scheme on which the Council had previously been consulted.

01/0781/FUL utility room extension, 8 Porters Croft

01/0825/FUL conservatory, The Stores, Church Lane

01/0884/FUL change of use to caravan park, Rose Manor Farm, Mickle Trafford. Objection on Green Belt grounds

01/0920/FUL extension to roof for proposed loft conversion, 54 Guilden Sutton Lane. Members expressed concerns as to the visual impact of the proposal. Matching materials were requested together with the withdrawal of permitted development rights. A strong objection would have been made had the proposal been at the front of the property

01/0940/FUL two storey extension 9 Fox Cover

01/1302/FUL replacement of flat roof with pitched roof, Highfield, Wicker Lane

01/1329/FUL two storey extension, Cherry Bank, Church Lane. No objection although the local planning authority was informed that car parking standards would not be met. Amended plans were submitted including two additional off-street parking spaces

01/1376/FUL extension 87 Oaklands. Objection to the proposal but no objection in principle. No observations made on amended plans.

02/0093/OUT one two storey dwelling, land adjoining Holly Cottage, Guilden Sutton Lane. Objection, inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

02/0136 /TEL Relocation and extension of existing 22.5 metre tower to extend the height to 30 metres, Dee Valley Water Reservoir, Guilden Sutton Lane. Objection, inappropriate development in the Green Belt

02/0194/FUL alterations and extensions, Halfways Hare Lane.

02/0243/FUL kitchen extension, pitched roof and new front entrance canopy, 43 Oaklands. The planning authority had been informed there were concerns as to the plans as submitted which so far as the arches to the canopy on the front elevation were concerned did not respect the vernacular of the estate at a prominent position on the main distributor road. It was thought that an amended proposal was to be put forward deleting this aspect .

No undue difficulties arose as a result of the construction of the gas pipeline from Birch Heath to Mickle Trafford through the parish although the work was delayed as a result of the foot and mouth restrictions Concerns as to the deposit of mud at the A51/Wicker Lane junction were raised with the environmental consultants for the scheme.

Commenting on a Planning Green Paper the Council has said it believed the City Council's planning board should decide those applications where there is a difference of between the Parish Council and the case officer. Concerns have been raised following a Government requirement that 90 per cent of all planning applications should now be determined by planning officers under delegated powers. For Chester City Council, this means that all householder applications will be dealt with in this way. The Council has welcomed the fact that a call in procedure has been adopted by the City Council at the instigation of City Councillor J R Boughton to enable the more contentious householder applications to be determined by the planning board. The Council also wishes see a strengthening of enforcement powers and provision for objectors to appeal against an approval, particularly if a departure is concerned.

The Council has been represented at meetings of the Cheshire Planning Forum and has taken advantage of opportunities provided by the City Council to visit the planning authority and to speak to case officers, enforcement officers and those responsible for processing planning applications. This was seen as most valuable.

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

Planning is by far the most contentious issue which the Council has to comment upon and represents the most significant area of discussion between the City Council and parish councils in Chester as members frequently feel that reasonable observations are disregarded.

Guilden Sutton has taken the lead in seeking an improved understanding with the planning authority and significant progress has been achieved although more work remained to be done.

Publications and information considered during the year included:

Planning Green Paper

## **Strategic Planning**

A review is awaited of Green Belt boundaries in the county to accommodate development after 2011 and possibly before.

Continued vigilance will be essential to protect the local environment given the pressure for development to the East of Chester. Significantly, papers deposited as part of the consultations on the Chester District Local Plan continued to argue for a business park on Guilden Sutton Lane. The Council became aware that proposals for a business park appeared to remain a live issue and alerted City Councillor B J Bailey to the possible need for further representations.

The Local Plan is the first plan to be produced by the City Council for the whole of Chester district. It has been subject to a lengthy public inquiry and the inspector's report is due this summer

The Parish Council has again been keen to protect the Green Belt and the distinctive character of Guilden Sutton which still follows the intentions laid down in the original development plan of the late 1960s.

This recognises the rural environment of the village and the Council continues to be anxious that the land between Guilden Sutton and Chester should not be developed with the parish being subsumed into the built up area of urban Chester. This point has been made strongly to both the county and city councils on all appropriate occasions and will continue to be pressed.

If approved the Local Plan will contain new proposals for controlling development in villages such as Guilden Sutton. These have the support of the Parish Council and would limit development to no more than one or two dwellings on otherwise built up frontages. We also await the inspector's findings on those areas of open space within the village which the Council believes should be specifically protected, for example the parish playing field on Guilden Sutton Lane.

It remains to be seen if the inspector has accepted the Council's arguments that the orchard on School Lane should be protected as an important green space.

The plan contains proposals for future policies to promote cycling. Although the Council is keen to see safe cycling routes from Guilden Sutton to Chester and Upton County High School, members are less clear about their support for measures to provide cycling routes through the rural area, including 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 concerned, was deleted from the plan at an early stage

So far as the urban area is concerned, the Council is 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 members are hopeful that this scheme will be possible, starting at Park Farm on Guilden Sutton Lane although disappointingly the most recent indication is that this aspiration will be at least three years away. The latter would most probably be achieved by means of an access from the cycleway at Mannings Lane South.

There has been little progress with the Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan. The County Council is obliged to form a plan for the disposal of the ever increasing volumes of waste produced by society and has been consulting to gather peoples' views as to the way forward. The Parish Council is keen to see more recycling in order to reduce the volume of waste going to landfill.

The Southern Crescent concept reported to last year's annual parish meeting which would allow development for employment purposes to override policies for the protection of the Green Belt has been deleted from regional planning guidance but is being carefully monitored to ensure it does not arise in another guise.

## **Leisure services**

### **Play Area.**

The long hoped for improvements to the children's play area came to fruition during the year.

With the assistance of a landfill tax credit grant, funding from the City Council, splendid fund raising by parents and a contribution from the parish Council, new wet pour safety surfacing was installed. Further fund raising by parents and another successful grant from the City Council has enabled the replacement of the front boundary fencing and gate, the removal of the front boundary hedge to open up the play area and the provision of a replacement see-saw.

During the year, damage to the front boundary fencing was rectified on an urgent basis on health and safety grounds

The Council has welcomed the renewed involvement and support of parents which was recognised by the Rt Worshipful the Lord Mayor, Councillor Graham Syddall Proctor, when he officially opened the new safety surfacing at the play area in the presence of members of the Parish Council, parents and children.

The provision of CCTV to monitor any anti social behaviour in the play area is now more likely following a successful bid by the Chester Community Safety Partnership which includes provision for mobile equipment for use in the rural area should problems arise.

The annual safety inspection continues to be carried out by RoSPA. This is backed by Chester City Council inspections and by a weekly visual inspection by the Parish Council.

### **Parish playing field**

The Council is pleased that as a result of a successful grant application to the City Council it has been possible to progress the intention to provide a basketball net and surfacing on the parish playing field for youths.

Advice has been sought on measures to improve the condition of the surface of the field and this remains under review.

The Council is disappointed that a minority of members of the public choose to exercise their dogs on the field and a permanent notice is to be displayed indicating this should not take place. Youths and young people using the field should not have to contend with any fouling whether or not the owners have cleaned up after their dogs.

## Public footpaths

The Council continues to be grateful to Mr Stephen Armstrong, the Parish Paths Warden, for the splendid work being carried out by the Footpaths Group.

Publications and information considered during the year included:

Mid Cheshire Footpath Society annual report

Mid Cheshire Footpath Society walks programme

Cheshire Signpost.

Information from the Countryside Agency as to the new access rights created by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

## Public transport

Councillor Mrs Astbury has continued as Local Bus User Contact.

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

The Council endeavours to obtain accurate timetable information about services to and from the village although it is not consulted by the operators and the position is not as clear as it desires. A summary of local services will appear in the newsletter when this is made available by County transport co-ordinators.

The 1310 ex Chester Bus Exchange which was deregistered as a commercial service by Chester City Transport now forms part of the Cheshire Bus network following representations put forward by the Council and local passengers.

The Council is fortunate to be represented on the Chester District Public Transport liaison committee by Councillor Armitage which allows concerns to be raised with County and City Council members and with Transport Co-ordination officers.

The Council was disappointed that no notification was received of a promotional fares initiative by Chester City transport which would have enabled the scheme to be publicised locally.

It has been noted that service 80 to Chester Business Park now proceeds through the city centre.

The poor condition of the rural transport information point on the village hall car park has been brought to the attention of the County Transport Co-ordination Service

Publications and information considered during the year included:

Chester District Public Transport liaison committee - agenda and minutes.

### **Highways - local**

The A41/Guilden Sutton Lane local safety scheme has succeeded in reducing the number of road traffic accidents at this difficult junction although they have not been eliminated entirely. Concern has been expressed at the actions of a minority of drivers emerging from Guilden Sutton Lane when the space in the central reservation is already occupied by a waiting vehicle. This is a totally unnecessary manoeuvre and places both waiting and approaching traffic at risk. Renewed concerns arose as to the misuse of this scheme particularly on Sundays by traffic unfamiliar with the junction proceeding to and from the Sunday market at the Rugby Club. These were referred to the highway authority.

The further deterioration in the condition of the carriageway and verges in Wicker Lane continued to concern the Council and a site meeting was sought with the District Maintenance Engineer. The Council was extremely pleased that this led to the resurfacing of a significant length of the road in March, 2002 following further representations to County Councillor J E Burke.

During the year, the long standing request to the highway authority for the provision of chevron signs in the vicinity of the sharp bend on Wicker Lane was fulfilled.

The Council was pleased that funding enabled School Lane to be surfaced dressed.

With the co-operation of the Wilding Business Estate, which was greatly appreciated, slow markings were provided on the access road to the estate approaching Guilden Sutton Lane to instil caution into emerging traffic

Larger direction signs are being sought to the Village Hall to assist visitors from outside the parish. It is hoped the scheme will also include signing to the village shops. This has been welcomed by the shopkeepers

Representations to the Dee Valley Group as to the frequency of bursts on Wicker led to assurances that the burst rate is monitored and appropriate action taken if necessary.

A successful site meeting was held by Councillor Paterson with a representative of the district maintenance engineer. A large number of faults were identified and repairs have recently been carried out for the first time for a number of years.

An approach was made to the district maintenance engineer after concerns had risen that a warning sign in Belle Vue Lane was incorrectly placed to assist those unfamiliar with the road that traffic should be expected in the middle of the carriageway.

Concerns were raised that with the introduction of cycle lanes on Vicars Cross Road as part of the Boughton Transport Corridor Improvement Project conditions at the A 51/Wicker Lane junction would be affected and would lead to increased rat running on Wicker Lane itself. An assurance was received from the highway authority that this will not be the case.

A request for a crossing from Hoole to Guilden Sutton Lane, put forward by a Hoole resident, has been supported by the Council.

Following a complaint, representations were made to Transco about the unsatisfactory reinstatement of certain verges on Guilden Sutton Lane disturbed by the mains replacement work in 2000.

The possible obstruction of the main drain in Hill Top Road was referred to the district maintenance engineer.

The attention of the district maintenance engineer has been drawn to the encroachment of the grass verge on to the footway in Guilden Sutton Lane between Heath Bank and the A 41 and to the fact the path in general is very poorly drained

It was noted that a length of Guilden Sutton Lane from the A 41 to the Guilden Sutton Lane diversion had been omitted from the Winter gritting routes This was raised with the highway authority.

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

Winter gritting routes

### **Highways - strategic**

The Council was consulted on a Route Management Strategy affecting the M 53/A 55/A483/A 550 Network from Birkenhead to the Welsh border. There was no direct impact on the parish.

### **Finance**

The Council has continued with its policy of deficit budgeting to return balances to the community. Annual expenditure has been rising in recent years as additional services and facilities have been provided and other costs have also increased. For 2002/03 the budget has increased marginally to £11,110 having been held at £10,760, in the previous two years. The increase, however, is only due to the proposed provision of an additional public seat funded by a generous grant from the Millennium Group. The Council has been increasing its precept to more closely match income and expenditure and the precept for 2002/03 has been set at £10,300 compared with £9,925 in 2001/02, with the additional commitments being funded from the remaining reserves. The increase in the precept of less than four per cent is thought to compare favourably with that of other authorities.

At present, the precept is approximately £1.35 per month for an average band D house in the

parish. The Council believes this represents good value for money but remains fully committed to spending council taxpayers' money wisely and to securing grants towards expenditure wherever this is possible. In 2001/02 the Council was again successful in attracting valuable external funding for local improvements. In the last two years, the record is:

Landfill tax credit £5,000 (net) - allocated to the play area

Chester City Council £1,000 - allocated to the play area

Chester City Council £250 - allocated to the Parochial Church Council

Chester City Council £1,200 - value of works, Fox Cover/Church Lane.

Chester City Council £3,471 - allocated to the play area and parish playing field

In addition the Council will receive a grant of the order of £450 towards the lengthsman service and recovers all VAT.

The Council is pleased to have received magnificent donations of almost £500 and £1,300 from interested parents in connection with improvements to the play area.

The Council had referred at the 2000 annual parish meeting to the new regulations concerning the audit which had been introduced in 1997. Along with many other councils of a similar size, members continued to believe these were unnecessarily complex when applied to expenditure at the level incurred by the Council. This had been raised nationally in view of the substantially increased audit fees which had resulted. These had amounted to almost £700 in Guilden Sutton's case for 1998/99, representing seven 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 subject to competitive tendering. The outcome has been a welcome reduction in the audit fee. The audit regulations have now changed again in that the more rigorous requirements falling on smaller councils such as Guilden Sutton have been lifted by the Government with effect from 1st April, 2001. However, as the Council is now required to appoint an independent person to act as internal auditor, a task previously carried out by a member of the Council, it is not known at this stage if there will be any scope for a further reduction in total audit fees.

The return to the previous system affects only the detail in which the final accounts are presented and not the testing of the probity of the Council's financial procedures. Indeed, under the new arrangements councillors will have greater responsibilities for ensuring the appropriate procedures are in place and are fully complied with

In line with policy, requests for funding from the Llangollen International Eisteddfod and Vision Support have been declined.

Financial documents considered by the Council during the year included:

Chester City Council community grant aid 2001/02

Chester City Council - maintenance of churchyards

Cheshire Community Council - Vital Villages Initiative

The Council's budget was agreed as follows:

Guilden Sutton Parish Council

Agreed budget 2002/03

Head Budget Budget Budget

2000/01 2001/02 2002/03

CATPCs sub. 220 220 235

CPRE 20 20 20

Community Council 35 40 40

Md Ch Ftpth Soc 10 10 10

BTCV 25 25 25

Best Kept Village 25 25 25

Salaries 2600 2600 2760

Postages 210 210 210

Photocopies 225 250 250

Stationery 75 75 75

Telephone 50 50 50

Mileage 50 100 100

Rates 675 675 675

Insurance 455 480 650

Play Area inspection 75 65 65

Audit 650 500 525

Gnds maintenance 725 750 825

Lengthsman 625 950 1750

Pl field rent 550 550 550

Footpth Gp grant 350 350 350

Newsletter 375 375 375

Pond Gp grant 50 50 0

Room hire 20 20 20

Memorial garden 50 50 50

Play Area capital 1000 1000 0

St. John's PCC 250 250 250

CATPCs ann mtng 15 20 25

Bulbs 100 75 95

Contingency 750 975 755

Millennium 500 0 0

Public seat 0 0 350

10760 10760 11110

Precept 9545 9925 10300

## **Environmental services**

A wide range of issues have arisen.

Concern continues to be expressed at the degree of dog fouling within the parish particularly on

footpath No. 2 and the access to the primary school. This is to be deprecated. An additional bin for the reception of canine faeces is to be provided at the hollows.

Further mass planting of daffodils has taken place. A photographic record of existing planting has been compiled in order to identify where further planting could most usefully take place. In the coming autumn, it is likely that planting will again be concentrated on Guilden Sutton Lane.

The Council continues to support the aims of the Pond Life Project with former Councillor Gartland nominally acting as Parish Pond Warden although the existence of the project is in some doubt due to lack of funding.

The City Council amenity cleansing schedule is supplemented as necessary by a locally appointed contractor who also scavenges the playing field, play area and other public areas on a regular basis. The Council also funds an additional 30 minutes scavenging each week following a request from the Community Association for assistance in helping to ensure the Village Hall car park and surrounds were maintained to a higher standard. The current year's budget provides for an additional 100 hours of amenity cleansing which will concentrate on Guilden Sutton Lane and the access from Hill Top Road to the primary school and the children's play area.

The Council is most grateful to Chester City Council for its continued support in tackling this difficult problem. Guilden Sutton Lane and Belle Vue Lane remain badly affected and the most severe dumping is removed by the City Council under the Environment Protection Act.

It is disappointing that the dingle at the rear of the Oaklands estate continues to suffer from tipping. A 'no tipping' sign which was removed from the verge is to be replaced.

Concerns as to possible hazards to children on the land adjoining the Summerfield Road shops were brought to the attention of the land owner.

## **Trees and hedges**

The Council continues to support the work of the Cheshire Landscape Trust which administers the Parish Tree Warden scheme from which the parish benefits and has made a further donation of £30

An inspection of the oak at Heath Bank by the City Council's tree officer revealed the tree to be in reasonable health.

The encroachment of a number of boundary hedges onto the footway was noted by the Council and a suitable note was included in the newsletter.

Tree management work was carried out by the City Council in the dell to sustain the area for a period of three to five years.

The advice of the tree officer has been sought as to the condition of the protected Sycamore in the Memorial Garden. Maintenance work is to be specified.

The Council was disappointed that the flowering cherries opposite the children's play area were damaged by vandals and subsequently removed.

Advice has been sought as to the future maintenance of the landscaping at Heath Bank following concerns raised by residents.

An up to date map of tree preservation orders in the parish has been provided by the City Council's tree officer.

### **Local government issues**

The Council has maintained close contact with the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils, Chester City Council, Cheshire County Council and Cheshire Community Council.

(a) Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils.

Councillor Armitage has continued as a member of the executive committee of the County Association and as chairman of the policy committee. He is also chairman of the Chester Area Meeting of which the Clerk is Honorary Secretary and the association's representative to the Chester district public transport liaison committee.

Representatives of the Council and the Clerk attended the association's annual meeting which was followed by a seminar on the Rural White Paper

Publications and other documents received by the Council during the year included:

Local Council Review

County Newsletter

National training strategy.

National Association draft corporate plan.

A new approach to local Council audit

Quality parish councils

(b) Chester City Council.

The Council has been grateful to City Councillors B J Bailey and J R Boughton and to City Council officers for their support and co-operation.

The Council was represented at the annual Parish Partnership Reception and members and the

Clerk attended meetings of the local panel covering the parish.

Ward members have attended meetings of the Council and site meetings.

The City Council wishes to replace the existing nine local panels with fewer area committees albeit with greater powers. The Council has expressed a preference for the areas to be served under the new arrangements to remain as at present and for there to be nine area committees.

A Rural Housing Needs survey by the City Council has identified a need for six new dwellings within the parish.

Individual members of the Council were consulted on the draft community plan. Councillor Armitage expressed reserve as to the short timescale of the consultation. He believed the document to be too focused on the city centre, giving only token recognition to the rural area. He wished to see greater emphasis on ICT for larger villages, public transport and improved playground facilities in the rural area.

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

Gowy Panel - Agenda and Minutes

City Council - Agenda and Minutes

Chester News

Past Uncovered

Chester Archaeology annual report

Cheshire Community History and Heritage News

Parish Bulletin

Economic Bulletin

Draft economic development statement 2001/02

Annual Report

Performance 2000/01

Chester International Links Association News

Walled Towns Friendship Circle Newsletter

Ecosert Project

Northern Marches Leader+ Project

Community Safety Partnership consultation

Community liaison arrangements

Friends of War Memorials

Draft supplementary planning guidance, provision of affordable housing/parking provision.

Refuse collection details, bank holiday periods.

Parish Contacts

LODIS Newsletter.

Chester Economic Development News.

(c) Cheshire County Council.

The Council has been grateful to County Councillor Burke and County Council officers for their continued support and co-operation.

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

Councillor Armitage represented the parish Council at a waste disposal seminar. The parish Council believes it is important that parishes are consulted when the alternatives have been considered.

County Council reports and other documents not previously referred to which were received by the Council during the year for consultation or information included:

Draft economic development statement

Chester Matters

Cheshire Environment

Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies Newsletter

Statement of Accounts 2000/01

Quality of Life survey

Engineering Service best value review

Road Safety Matters

Consultations on a new structure.

Safer driving courses.

The Cheshire Partnership, consultation

A to Z of a highways services and contacts.

Road safety

Trading Standards advice

Cheshire Education Service, consultation

(d) Cheshire Community Council.

Councillor Armitage has continued as vice-chairman of the rural transport partnership.

The Council continues to have observer status in relation to the Village Design Statements project.

During the year, the Council was informed that following the resignation of the chief executive, the Community Council was operating under a restructured management to see the organisation through a period of financial difficulty.

The Council is to review the parish's entry in the Cheshire Best Kept Village Competition having again decided there was insufficient support to participate in 2002. Marks in recent years, although no worse than average, have highlighted that a number of aspects need to be improved including the extent of community involvement. Again the Council would be pleased to hear peoples' views

Reports and documents received for consideration included:

Cheshire Cauldron

Annual report.

Vital Villages Initiative

Cheshire Cauldron.

Rural life conference.

Survey of provision for young people.

Village action Plans Briefing.

Funding for Rural Transport Briefing.

Parish transport grants seminar

### **Code of Conduct**

The Council responded to consultations on a proposed model code of conduct for elected members. This has now been adopted by the Council. Councillor Armitage was successfully nominated to represent parish councils in Chester district on the City Council's ethics and standards committee which oversees the arrangements

CPRE

The Council has continued in membership of the CPRE.

Documents and other information considered during the year included:

Chester District annual report

Cheshire branch annual report

CPRE Voice

Housing development seminar

Planning update

Rural Matters

### **Policing**

The Council continued to have frequent and valuable contact with PC Richard Tack who is responsible for Christleton ward and is part of a team based at the Mickle Trafford police house.

A number of issues were raised with PC Tack during the year.

A resident addressed the Council in respect of antisocial behaviour by a small minority of young people. PC Tack responded as to the initiatives being taken by the police. The Council indicated the lack of leisure facilities was recognised

The Council together with the Community Association, the police and City Councillor B J Bailey responded to concerns raised by adjoining occupiers as to incidents of anti social behaviour in the vicinity of the village hall and shops.

The Council supported a major funding bid put forward by the Chester Community Safety Partnership which includes the availability of CCTV for problem locations in the rural area.

The Council also supported Project Rural Matters which has seen two high-profile visits to the parish by the specialist vehicle involved and officers.

PC Tack and Dee Valley Group were informed that youths were gathering in the reservoir access on Guilden Sutton Lane causing large amounts of litter. The police were also informed of an abandoned vehicle which was set on fire before removal.

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

Cheshire Police Forum Agenda and Minutes

Cheshire Police Authority annual report

Cheshire Police annual report

Cheshire Policing Plan 2001/02

Policing Standards 2001/02

Lay visiting scheme

Local policing objectives

Cheshire Crimebeat Initiative

Chester Community Safety Partnership crime and disorder audit, consultation. Project Rural Matters

## **Surgeries**

In addition to the introduction of public speaking time prior to each meeting of the Council, the Council agreed a series of experimental surgeries held on the first Saturday of each month, attended by two members between 10:00am and 10:30am. Although the numbers attending

these surgeries have been small, the issues which have been raised have warranted action by the Council.

## **Commonwealth Games**

The Council had accepted an invitation from the Rt Worshipful the Lord Mayor for the Council to be represented at a meeting in connection with the Commonwealth Games. A suggestion was made to the organisers of the games that the route of the baton relay should be diverted to the parish but no response was received.

## **Deva FM**

The Council received a presentation by Mr S Maskery on behalf of Deva F M, one of the applicants for the proposed new local radio licence for Chester. It was agreed the principle of a local radio station for Chester should be supported although the Council would not be minded to indicate any preferred bidder subject to a range of satisfactory applications.

## **Foot and mouth outbreak.**

Concern was expressed that the footpath network had become overgrown due to the closure of paths as a result of the foot and mouth emergency.

Due to the outbreak the general and county council elections were postponed until the first Thursday in June.

Information on various aspects of the emergency was circulated to the Council by the City and County Councils.

## **Health**

The Council was informed or consulted on the following issues:

The future organisation of primary care.

Health mental health and learning disabilities trust, consultation.

## **Primary school.**

Councillor Fisher reported the school had received an award for excellence and higher than expected results. The Council was delighted to hear of this recognition and the chairman of the governors was congratulated on behalf of the school and asked to pass on the Council's appreciation to the head teacher.

## **Other matters.**

Other matters considered by the Council during the year included:

Chester and District Housing Trust annual report.

Chester Citizens Advice Bureau rural advice service.