

Guilden Sutton Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Guilden Sutton Village Hall on 14 April, 2003

Chairman: Councillor R M Armitage.

Apologies: Cllr J Proudlove, 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 and three members of the public.

1 Minutes. The minutes of the annual parish meeting held on Monday 13 May 2002 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 would be attached in full to these minutes.

The Chairman thanked Members, County and City councillors and the Clerk for their support during the year.

3 Questions from electors.

Mrs Fisher believed that by and large residents were extremely satisfied with the work of the Parish Council. She referred to an accumulation of litter and refuse at the access to the reservoir on Guilden Sutton Lane which the Chairman indicated was within Mickle Trafford and District Parish. Appropriate action would, however, be taken.

In response to a question by Cllr Fisher, the Chairman said that although the monthly surgeries previously held on the first Saturday of each month had been discontinued, the position would be reconsidered if this was thought to be necessary.

Concluded the meeting, the Chairman referred to the retirement of Cllr Whitehouse who was not seeking re-election after having served for a number of years. Action to fill the three vacancies which had arisen given there were only five valid nominations for the quadrennial elections to be held on Thursday 1 May 2003, would be considered in May.

The Chairman thanked members of the public for their attendance.

The meeting concluded at 7.25pm.

Annual reports, 2003/04

Chairman's Report.

2003/04 has been an extremely busy period for the Parish Council on behalf of the local community.

The quadrennial Parish Council elections were held on Thursday 1 May, 2003. Two Members of the Council, Cllrs Whitehouse and Arditti, indicated they were not seeking re-election and we wished them well for the future. Five candidates were validly nominated for election to the Council and returned unopposed:

Robert Michael Armitage, 12 Oaklands

Patricia Gabrielle Astbury, 6 Heath Bank, Guilden Sutton Lane

Danny Michael Fisher, 5 The Dell

Derek Hughes, 47 Oaklands

Julie Anne Proudlove, The Woodlands, Wicker Lane.

It was noted that this would result in three vacancies to be filled by co-option after 1 May, 2003 and agreed that action should be taken to publicise the vacancies at an early stage. Posters were exhibited on the parish noticeboards and on the website and Cllr Paterson kindly agreed to arrange publicity in the village hall on

polling day.

The Council began the process of filling the remaining three vacancies at its annual meeting, having indicated it would be pleased to hear from any members of the electorate who wished to serve the community in this way. Mrs P M Paterson, who had previously served as a parish councillor in the parish, returned to the Council followed subsequently by new members of Mr R J K Bayton and Mrs G Young.

The Council was saddened to learn of the death of former Parish Cllr Herbert Dutton.

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 properly taken a great deal of time.

During the year, arrangements continued under which individual Members expressed an interest on specific aspects of the Council's business as follows:

Cllr Armitage: Policy, Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils, National Association of Local Councils, Ethics and Standards, Strategic Planning.

Cllr Astbury: Public Transport.

Cllr Fisher: Major highway schemes, Education, Cheshire County Council.

Cllr Hughes: Development control, finance, community safety, public footpaths.

Cllr Paterson: Health, Social Services, Parish highways, Village Hall, Fire Service/Fire Authority, Youth.

Cllr Proudlove: Play area.

Cllr Bayton: Police/Police Authority.

Cllr Young: Youth/CPRE.

The Clerk: Chester City Council.

The following representatives were appointed to outside bodies:

Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils, Chester Area Meeting: Cllrs Armitage, Fisher, Hughes.

Cheshire Community Council Village Halls Forum: Cllr Hughes.

CPRE: Cllrs Paterson, Bayton.

Guilden Sutton Village Hall Management Committee: Cllr Paterson.

Chester City Council Goway North Area Committee: Cllrs Armitage, Hughes.

Play Area Group. Cllrs Proudlove, Paterson.

The following Office holders were appointed:

Parish Paths Warden: Mr B Lewin.

Parish Tree Warden: Mr M Gartland.

Local Bus User Contact: Cllr P Astbury.

Cllr Fisher continued as the Council's nomination to the governing body of Guilden Sutton Church of England Controlled Primary School.

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.

Guilden Sutton again provided both the Chairman (Cllr Armitage) and Honorary Secretary (The Clerk) of the Chester Area Meeting of the association. Cllr Armitage also serves as a member of the association's executive committee and as a representative to the Chester District Public Transport Liaison Committee. In addition he represents Parish Councils in Chester district on the City Council's Ethics and Standards Committee.

Members and the Clerk have 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, which is now expected to be adopted in 2005 and which includes 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 representations made to the City Council as part of the local plan process for land at Guilden Sutton Lane to be allocated as a business park and for 1,600 new houses to be built between Guilden Sutton and Littleton .

There have also been consultations on a wide range of other matters by bodies such as the City and County Councils, the Police and Fire Services and the Government which in one way or another affect the parish. These included a proposal by Mrs C M Russell MP that the City Council's Christleton ward should be moved out of the City of Chester parliamentary constituency into the Eddisbury parliamentary constituency. This was resisted by the Parish Council at a public inquiry and dismissed by the assistant commissioner

On finance, the Council has decided to change its approach. In recent years there has been a policy of deficit budgeting to return balances to the community. Annual expenditure has also been rising as additional services and facilities have been provided and other costs have increased. Some action had already been taken to more closely match income and expenditure. It was clear the Council should at least aim to have a balanced budget in order to build up reserves for major expenditure such as any future replacement of the equipment in the children's play area and similar major projects. For 2003/04 the budget had been held at £11,110. For 2004/05 there was a small increase to £11,338. In line with the new approach, the Council increased its precept to the same figure in order to match income and expenditure. This entailed an increase from the previous year's figure of £10,300.

At present, the precept is approximately £1.50 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 2003/04 for example, the Council was successful in attracting valuable external funding of £2,500 towards the first phase of proposed improvements including the children's play area. The Council is also reimbursed by the City Council for approximately 50% of the cost of the village lengthsmen.

The Council is pleased that the City Council is conducting a review of the double taxation anomaly whereby, for example, council taxpayers in Guilden Sutton fund the cost of provision of the children's play area and the parish playing field in addition to making a contribution to similar facilities in Grosvenor Park. The Council believes on the basis of an initial analysis that 25% of its overall budget could qualify for relief if the outcome of the review leads to changes in the system.

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. Two such applications arose during the year.

A number of local highway matters were considered. The Council remains disappointed that a number of motorists exiting Guilden 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. As a result of a site meeting involving County Cllr J E Burke, new markings were provided in an attempt to deal with this problem.

County Cllr Burke also supported a bid by the Parish Council which led to improved signing and lining on part of Guilden Sutton Lane including at the approach to the parish playing field.

The Council shared the disappointment at the failure of the long awaited improvement to the verge of the footway from Fox Cover to Church Lane due to unfavourable rainfall. Following work by Chester City Council to clear the verge, action was taken to obtain a supply of replacement shrubs from the Cheshire Landscape Trust and these were planted by Members of the Council. It is hoped that with ongoing maintenance, the condition of the verge will be improved.

Street lighting faults continue to be reported although in the last 12 months these have been fewer than usual. These can be reported by any resident at any time

by telephoning the number and location of the light concerned to the Guilden Sutton highway office on 01244 603475.

Members maintain a close interest in local bus services and Cllr Mrs Astbury has continued as the local bus user contact. The future of the County Council supported Sunday bus service through the parish has remained in some doubt for a number of years in the light of reductions required to offset rising contract prices. The Council is pleased that following the most recent reductions, the service has been retained. It must remain a possibility that the service could be discontinued at some point. This would be disappointing to the Council and to City Cllr J R Boughton who both strongly supported the initiative. All local residents are urged to patronise the service as its future would rest on a 'use it or lose it' basis.

One early morning journey through the village on the 54 service was lost as a result of the most recent reductions and support was also withdrawn for the school service to Christleton County High School on the basis that pupils using the service were out of zone. This latter reduction was resisted by the Parish Council on the grounds the loss of the service, for which there was no suitable alternative, would lead to increased traffic congestion at peak hours.

The Council is pleased the parish playing field, which is rented from a private landowner, continues to be a useful village amenity. This was enhanced by the provision during 2002/03 of the basketball net thanks to a City Council grant.

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 in recent years thanks to magnificent fund raising by interested parents and grants from Chester City Council and WREN. It has, however, been in place for a considerable number of years and the equipment does not provide the best play value or meet more recently introduced safety standards. Thanks to much hard work over a long period by Cllr Julie Proudlove, suitable replacement equipment has been identified and as a first phase, that for preschool age children is due to be installed this summer, again with the help of a City Council grant. The replacement of the multi-purpose item designed for primary age children is dependent on the availability of further grants and applications have been made to the City Council, WREN and the Lottery 'Awards for All' scheme. It is hoped the outcome of these applications will be known in the summer and if successful, the replacement of that equipment will proceed as soon as possible thereafter. Other improvements which are proposed for the play area include the possible provision of additional seating within the play area itself.

Regular basic inspections are carried out on an informal basis by Members of the Council, two of whom have received initial training in this aspect. The formal annual inspection is arranged for the Parish Council by Chester City Council. 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 would wish to thank the Parish Footpaths Warden, Mr Brian Lewin for leading the Parish Paths Group in the valuable work it does for the community.

Of particular concern during the year was a proposal by Cheshire County Council to upgrade the status of public footpath No. 7, the green lane on the boundary of Guilden Sutton and Mickle Trafford parishes, to a byway open to all traffic on the basis of historical evidence dating back prior to the invention of the internal combustion engine. This has been strongly resisted by the Parish Council although the necessary order has been agreed by the Rights of Way Committee and is due to be advertised in the summer. All residents of the village will have the opportunity to make representations but under the legislation, these should not be based on whether or not the footway is suitable to become a byway open to all traffic. The County Council has agreed to consider a traffic regulation order at an appropriate stage to prevent the use of the route by mechanically propelled vehicles. Representations have also been made by the Parish Council to the Government which is undertaking consultations on byways open to all traffic in view of the damage and nuisance which has arisen in other parts of the country. The order is likely to be challenged at a public inquiry.

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

The Council's newsletter continues to appear and has now reached its 100th issue. Members would be pleased to hear comments as to its value in helping the Council's communications within the Parish. During the year, the noticeboard at Guilden Sutton Lane, originally provided by a member of the community, was removed having suffered damage and wear and tear. Proposals are in hand for its replacement. The remaining parish noticeboards opposite the Summerfield Road shops and at the car park on Church Lane continue to be well used.

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 Guilden Sutton Lane. This continues to be a serious concern and the Council is grateful to the City Council for its help in having litter removed on an all too regular basis. During the year, the Parish Council funded additional amenity cleansing by its contractor 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 would be pleased to receive views on the Parish's entry in the Cheshire Best Kept Village Competition having again decided there was insufficient support to participate in 2004. Marks in earlier years, although no worse than average, had highlighted that a number of aspects needed to be improved including the extent of community involvement.

The Council remains concerned at the degree of dog fouling within the village, particularly on the footpath leading to the primary school and the dingle footpath. 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. During the year, following a request from a resident, an additional bin was provided in Guilden Sutton Lane.

So far as the policing of the Parish is concerned, PC Michael Powell has been replaced by PC Rob Boulton with whom we look forward to a long and successful relationship. PC Boulton has attended a number of meetings of the Parish Council to discuss Policing issues and has also made several high-visibility patrols of the parish accompanied by Parish Councillors. This initiative is very much to be welcomed. Generally Guilden Sutton is seen as a relatively peaceful village although there have in the past been isolated instances of anti social behaviour in the vicinity of the play area and the Village Hall. The new CCTV equipment there is known to have had a beneficial effect.

The Council continues to embrace information technology. A significant proportion of the Clerk's contact with Members and with the City and County Councils and other organisations and individuals has been carried out through e-mail for a number of years. Under the leadership of Cllr Fisher, the village web site has been further developed and offers an ever increasing range of information about the Council and the community, attracting praise from the USA. The Council was pleased to become the first in Cheshire to take advantage of an offer by the County Council to host the site which has resulted in a modest reduction in its running costs.

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

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.

A total of 31 new or amended planning applications were considered by the Council during the year, compared with 20 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 are involved in recommending any response and in these circumstances, other than with minor proposals, the Chairman and Vice Chairman are also consulted. In addition, the Council constantly reviews its practices for dealing with applications to ensure these are as thorough and fair as possible.

2003/04 was the first full year of the revised procedure by the City Council for handling householder applications. All of these, apart from those where there is a contentious objection, are now decided by planning officers. The remaining applications continue to be decided by the Planning Board.

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. The following new or amended applications were dealt with during the year. (NOTE Unless otherwise indicated, the application was approved by the local planning authority except for those marked * where a decision was awaited at the time of writing.)

Decisions on applications from the previous year subsequent to the Annual Parish Meeting:

03/00250/FUL conservatory at 12 School Lane CH3 7ET Mr and Mrs B Lewin.

03/00295/FUL single storey rear extension at 40 Guilden Sutton Lane CH3 7EY for Mr S Challinor.

03/00296/FUL single storey rear extension with party wall at 38 Guilden Sutton Lane CH3 7EY for Mr S Hardwick.

New Applications

03/00183/FUL rear single storey extension at 6 School Lane CH3 7ET for Mrs S Button. Cllr Hughes reported. It was noted an objection had been raised by the

immediately adjoining neighbour at 4 School Lane.

The planning authority had been informed the Council shared the concerns expressed by the neighbour about the impact of a proposed pitched roof in close proximity to their property which would restrict the morning light to their kitchen. It was noted the extension used the party wall whereas in contrast a rear extension at no 4 had been built stepped back from no 6. The Council was also concerned that the extension would require the party wall to be demolished, including the wall of a building at no 4 and that the eaves and gutters would overhang no 4. Should the application be approved, the Council wished to see a condition that no further development would be permitted at the dwelling as this would be out of keeping with the cottage nature of the property.

03/00183/FUL (amended) rear single storey extension, 6 School Lane, CH3 7ET for Mrs S Button. Cllr Hughes reported. Although the applicant had moved towards the objector, it was felt the proposal would still have a significant detrimental effect on the occupiers of 4 School Lane and would be unduly or obtrusive in breach of local plan policy GE3 which sought to protect the amenities of people living nearby. It was considered the proposal should be moved further away from the party wall. Refused. Amended proposal constructed under permitted development.

03/00342/FUL first floor side extension above garage at Orchard House, 8 School Lane CH3 7ET for Mr L Bunn. Cllr Hughes. No objection.

03/00376/FUL two storey side and rear extension and loft conversion at 50 Guilden Sutton Lane, CH3 7EY for Mr C Allman. Cllr Hughes reported. No objection.

03/00395/FUL single/two storey side extension at 16 Oaklands CH3 7HE for Mr Salisbury. Cllr Arditti reported. No objection.

03/00417/FUL, ground and first floor extensions at Mossfield, Belle Vue Lane, CH3 7PJ for Mr J Dandy. Cllr Paterson reported. It was agreed that no objection should be raised in respect of the proposed extension to the front of the property although there were concerns as to a proposed conservatory/greenhouse to the side for which little detail had been provided. It was agreed that further information should be sought from the planning officer as to the construction method of a proposed wall and a perceived boundary issue. It was noted this application had been withdrawn.

03/00421/FUL single storey classroom extensions at Guiden Sutton CE (Cont) Primary School, Arrowcroft Road. Cllr Armitage reported. It was agreed the proposal should be supported.

03/00493/FUL, conservatory to rear at 4 Orchard Croft, CH3 7SL for Mr and Mrs Crane. Cllr Paterson reported. No objection.

03/00577/FUL rear extension at 6 Middlecroft CH3 7HF for Mr Young. Cllr Hughes reported. The Clerk reported the receipt, by letter dated 16 May 2003 of an objection by Mr M Pejic, 4 Oaklands, Guiden Sutton, CH3 7HE. Mr Pejic's concerns as to the effect of the proposal on his property so far as light and proximity were concerned were brought to the attention of the planning authority. It had been suggested these concerns may be mitigated by hiping the roof.

The Council had requested that these should be considered against policy DGE5c in the draft revised Chester District Local Plan (impact on the amenities of people living nearby.) It was further agreed the planning authority should be asked to visit the 30% guideline in respect of a possible previous extension to the property and the absence of notification to the occupier of 4 Oaklands.

03/00672/FUL replacement pitched roof garage at Roughwood, Belle Vue Lane, Guiden Sutton, CH3 7EJ for W Davies. Cllr Fisher reported. It was confirmed there were no observations other than a wish for the ridge height to be no higher than that of the bungalow.

Proposed RRC, Wrexham. The Clerk reported that Wrexham County Borough Council had confirmed the authority had received a fresh planning application from HLC for a proposed waste to energy plant involving a gasification and pyrolysis system. As a result, the public inquiry beginning on June 10, 2003 relating to the original planning application had been cancelled. The new application would come before the Planning Committee in due course. The Council would shortly be undertaking publicity so that the public had the opportunity to consider the revisions and make comments. (Original response: Proposal involved the use of emerging and unproven technologies, concern as to emissions which, should the application be approved, should be subject to ongoing monitoring within Chester District. Further noted the proposal afforded no encouragement for recycling and offered the prospect of unsustainable increased traffic due to materials being taken to the centre from a wide area.)

03/00923/FUL first floor extension at Mossfield, Belle Vue Lane, CH3 7EJ for Mr J Dandy. Members did not feel able on the basis of the information contained within the submitted plans to offer any observations. Further details were sought. The Clerk reported he had been advised by the case officer that the amended application did not include the side extension in the original proposal. On this basis, no observations were made.

03/00961/FUL conservatory at 15 Oaklands CH3 7HE for Mr and Mrs Rose. Cllr Paterson reported. No observations.

03/01358/FUL tanning salon at 1 Summerfield Road CH3 7SW for Mr S Gregory.

Cllr D Hughes expressed a personal interest in this application as Chairman of the Guiden Sutton Community Association which controlled the adjoining car park.

Cllr Mrs P M Paterson expressed a personal interest in this application as the Council's representative to the Village Hall Management Committee.

Cllr Fisher reported. No objections had been received. Cllr Hughes expressed concern that occupiers in the vicinity may not be happy with clients visiting up to 9.00pm, including at weekends. He referred to wider advertising which had been carried out by the applicant and suggested that occupiers adjoining the car parks of the shops and Village Hall should be consulted. Cllr Fisher subsequently reported that adjoining occupiers had been notified of the proposal. A response had been received from Mrs Connolly, 101 Oaklands. The following response was forwarded to the local planning authority:

' There is some concern the business is operating without the benefit of planning permission and that the application refers to the availability of 20 parking spaces. This number of spaces is not provided for within the adopted highway fronting the premises and these are shared by customers of the adjacent businesses and possibly all or some of their staff. The large car park adjoining the premises is in private ownership and is intended primarily to serve users of the Village Hall and the primary school. Members request the highway authority should be satisfied as to the traffic implications, including the use of Summerfield Road and possibly Hill Top Road as accesses to the premises and that the effect of the proposal on the amenity of occupiers, including those who may be affected by increased traffic, should be carefully considered. A terminal hour of 9.00pm is requested Monday to Friday, 7.00pm on Saturdays and 1.00pm on Sundays to protect the amenity of occupiers, including those living immediately above the premises.'

The Clerk understood there had been no objection from the highway authority.

03/01377/TEL, installation of telecommunications apparatus (3 no antennas and 3 no microwave dishes) and equipment cabin at existing Installation at Dee Valley Water Reservoir, Guiden Sutton Lane. The Clerk reported it had come to his notice that a site notice in respect of this application was displayed at the entrance to the reservoir. Further details were sought from the local planning authority which had no objection to the siting and design.

Response: The Parish Council has previously objected to applications at this location on the grounds of inappropriate development in the Green Belt but accepts the principle has been determined on appeal. The local planning authority is asked to indicate if the three day nurseries in the vicinity - Spinney Day Nursery on Warrington Road, Pipers in Hoole and the Guiden Sutton Day Nursery on Guiden Sutton Lane - were consulted by the City Council or the applicant.

Members understand the applicant will have certified the installation meets the necessary requirements as to emissions but would appreciate confirmation the beams of greatest intensity will not affect the Guiden Sutton Day Nursery. Similarly, the planning authority is asked if it is able to confirm - if it is the appropriate authority so to do - that the combined emissions from operators on the site meet the requirements and will not be prejudicial to the Guiden Sutton Day Nursery.

03/01528/OUT detached dwelling to rear garden of vicarage at The Vicarage, Wicker Lane, CH3 7EL for the Chester Diocesan Board of Finance. Cllrs Armitage and Fisher reported. No objection was raised to the principle of development but Members wished to see a condition at this stage limiting any dwelling to a maximum of two storeys. The applicant was asked to consider a preference for two smaller, lower cost properties. The Council would not wish the development to be overdominant, particularly so far as the cottage type dwellings on the opposite side of Church Lane were concerned. There should be no accommodation in the roof space (ie 2 ½ storeys) as Members would wish to preclude any development of apartments which would be totally out of keeping. In stating a preference for two smaller dwellings, subject to the general consideration rehearsed above as to overdominance, the Council recognised there were a considerable number of larger properties in the village and would be happy with either social housing or smaller dwellings. The involvement of a social landlord was seen to have advantages in dealing with the problem faced by many young families in acquiring a property and would be a valuable opportunity for the church to exercise its pastoral role. The planning authority was also advised that the main sewer in Church Lane is extremely flat, leading to surcharging of the manhole in the vicinity of the application site. This results in sewage being discharged into the highway. The planning authority was asked to be satisfied as to the drainage details with respect to the additional property (ies) and to require an upgrading of the sewer to the appropriate standard as a condition of any approval.

03/01546/OUT two storey dwelling in part of garden at Newhall Rise, School Lane CH3 7EU for Mr and Mrs J Cox. Cllrs Fisher and Paterson reported. A possible access issue was noted. It was thought the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Cllr Fisher expressed the view the Council would not wish to seek development beyond the present built up area of the village. The Clerk reported an approach had been received from Mr Cronin with respect to this proposal. It was agreed the local planning authority should be informed the Council wished to object on Green Belt grounds (Chester District Local Plan policy ENV63) as it believed the proposal would result in an unacceptable encroachment of built development beyond what is at present the physical limit of the village. Outline planning permission was refused as the proposal did not represent infill development and was inappropriate development for which no special circumstances existed. The Clerk reported notification of an appeal by notice dated 12 February 2004 from the City Council. He further reported the receipt of copy correspondence from City Cllr J R Boughton dated 16 February 2004 to residents of Station Lane, The Hall, The Stables and School Lane and 4 March 2004 to the Planning Inspectorate. Cllr Boughton reported. Cllr Armitage believed the Council should reconsult adjoining occupiers as to the alleged use by the appellant of the vehicular access to the site. Observations: Further to the Council's written objection to this application to the local planning authority, the Council is aware of the statement by the appellant that the proposed access has been used by vehicles for business purposes for a number of years. The Council has no knowledge of this activity and further consultations with adjoining occupiers have not led to the discovery of evidence which would support this position.

03/01564/FUL retrospective application to replace side/front flat roof with pitched roof and brick up sides to existing porch at 4 The Vetches CH3 7HL for Mr K Green. Cllr Paterson reported. No objection.

03/01777/FUL porch, garden room and utility extension at Post Office Cottage, Guiden Sutton Lane, CH3 7EX for Mr and Mrs Dale. Inquiries had been made by Cllrs Paterson and Armitage. No objection.

03/01855/FUL dwelling house at The Cottage, Church Lane, CH3 7EW for Mr G Bell.

Cllr Bayton declared a prejudicial interest.

Cllrs Armitage and Paterson reported. The Clerk reported the receipt of objections dated 8 November 2003 from Mr D Hancock, 11 Fox Cover and Mr K Mohring, 12 Fox Cover and from Mr and Mrs R Bayton dated 10 November 2003. It was noted that extensive consultations had been carried out and a number of concerns had arisen. An objection was raised on the basis it was not believed the site fell to be considered within the LPA's infill policy as the garden did not form part of a continuous built up frontage. There were concerns the size of the plot may have been overstated, resulting, given the overlarge footprint of the proposed dwelling, in only a small amount of private amenity space to the rear. A three storey property was considered to be too high and note should be taken of the impact on the residential amenity and privacy of occupiers in Fox Cover. The proposed balcony would overlook a public footpath. The LPA was asked to confirm the protected status or otherwise of any trees which may be affected by the proposal as it was believed there could be pressure from future occupiers for lopping or felling. The LPA was also be asked to consider whether any excavation to enable the proposal to be constructed would affect the stability of the bank to the rear of the site and gardens of properties in Fox Cover. It was pointed out that Church Lane is an extremely narrow cul de sac with no footways and is unsuitable for any on street parking.

The lane is used by pedestrians to and from two nearby public footpaths and the section fronted by the application site forms part of the Longster Trail. Reference was also be made to the fact that the foul sewer in Church Lane is flat, leading to manholes becoming surcharged and in the opinion of the Parish Council is overloaded. Refusal of planning permission (Green Belt, cramped and intrusive development.)

03/01972/FUL amendments to previous planning permission 02/01043/FUL for two storey extension at 26 Oaklands CH3 7HE for Mr and Mrs Dalgarno. Cllr Fisher reported the previously approved proposal had been amended to provide a pitched roof to the front of the property and had subsequently been further amended to allow a small change to the design. The majority of neighbours had been consulted and it was agreed that no observations should be made. It was noted the applicant had been informed that all works associated with the approved scheme including the foundations and guttering should be contained wholly on land within the applicant's ownership and that the attention of the applicant had been drawn to the provisions of the Party Wall Act 1996.

03/02072/FUL garage conversion to living space and the installation of three rear elevation rooflights for loft conversion at 1 The Stables, Station Lane CH3 7SY for Mr B O'Neill. Cllrs Hughes and Bayton reported. It was agreed that no observations should be made subject to no future approval for a replacement garage. The Clerk reported the receipt, by letter dated 22 December 2003, of advice from the case officer that the application file was being closed as the proposed external alterations were classed as permitted development and did not require a formal planning application. This was noted.

03/02098/FUL first floor side extension and conversion of flat roof to pitched roof at rear, 95 Oaklands, CH3 7HG for Mr A Mark. Further inquiries had been made by Cllrs Paterson and Hughes who reported. No observations. The Council welcomed a condition requiring that two car parking spaces should be made available within the curtilage of the site and kept available for that purpose prior to the extension being brought into use.

03/02203/FUL two storey extension at 42 School Lane CH3 7ET for Mrs Oldham. Cllr Paterson reported. It was agreed there was no objection but the Council wished to draw to the attention of the planning authority the fact there were no dimensions on the drawings other than the scale and the projection to the front of the property would break the building line on that part of School Lane.

03/02260/FUL (neighbouring Parish Council notification) conservatory at Holly House, Hare Lane, Pipers Ash CH3 7ED for Dr and Mrs Porter. The Clerk reported the receipt of this notification. It was agreed there were no observations.

04/00045/FUL replace existing flat roof over garage and study at front of house with a pitched roof over garage and sloping roof over study at 2 Orchard Croft CH3 7SL for Mr B Clayton. Cllrs Paterson and Young. The Clerk reported the resubmission of these previously approved plans for which permission had expired. No objections.

04/00268/FUL* side and rear extension at 69 Oaklands CH3 7HG for Mr Hawkin. Cllrs Fisher and Armitage reported. Observations: The total increase of 70% in the living accommodation of this modest semi detached house is considerably in excess of the City Council's guideline of 30% and this may constitute over development. The proposed removal of the garage would reduce provision for car parking to a single space serving a four bedroomed property on the basis of existing provision. This part of Oaklands is on the approach to a bend with limited visibility where concerns due to on street parking have already been brought to the attention of the highway authority and to the police. The Council would be concerned about any proposal from the applicant to provide replacement curtilage parking on such a small frontage. If this were to be repeated on other adjoining dwellings, there would be an adverse impact on the street scene in this prominent location. Should the City Council be minded to approve the proposal, the Council requests a condition that no first floor window should be inserted into the elevation facing 1-7 Cathcart Green in view of concerns raised by the occupiers of these properties.

04/00300/FUL (neighbouring Parish Council notification) conservatory at Meadow Lea Farm, Station Lane, Mickle Trafford for J Graham. The Clerk reported the receipt of this notification. It was agreed there were no observations.

04/00457/FUL* single storey extension, roof light to main roof at 16 Guilden Sutton Lane CH3 7EY for Mr and Mrs O'Brien. Cllr Hughes. No objection to the application so far as it affects the rear of the property. Objection to the proposed extension to the front of the dwelling due to the detrimental impact on the street scene in the particular context of other dwellings on Guilden Sutton Lane which have not been similarly extended.

The Council has been represented by Cllr Armitage at meetings of the Cheshire Planning Forum. The Clerk, who attends meetings of the City Council's Planning Board in another capacity, has taken advantage of opportunities to speak to case officers, enforcement officers and those responsible for processing planning applications and this has been of assistance to the Council.

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 potentially 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, it is argued this is not the case. Guilden Sutton has taken the lead in seeking an improved understanding with the planning authority and significant progress has been achieved.

Publications and information considered during the year included:

Chester City Council Planning Board, case officers' reports and supporting information.

Strategic Planning

The Council believes continued vigilance will be essential to protect the local environment given the pressure for development to the East of Chester. This has been confirmed by objections raised as part of the Chester District Local Plan process, last year, which revealed proposals for a business park on land bounded by Guilden Sutton Lane, the A 55, the A 56 and the A 41 and for land to be allocated to accommodate 1,600 dwellings on farm land between Guilden Sutton and Littleton. Both of these objections were dismissed. Following the publication of the inspectors' report, the local plan, which is the first to be produced by the City Council for the whole of Chester district and has been subject to a lengthy public inquiry, is now in its final stages of public consultation and is expected to be adopted in 2005 following a further public inquiry into a limited range of issues.

During this process, the Parish Council has 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.

Cllr Armitage reported on a consultation with respect to proposed modifications to the Local Plan and it was agreed the planning authority would be advised as follows:

Land south of Guilden Sutton. (Inspector's report page 7 - 48, paras 7.246 - 7.250.) It is noted the inspector had proposed no modification and had rejected proposals for housing development on 53 hectares. The Council concurs and points out the land is farmland and its development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the countryside and represent a loss of agricultural land. There are no exceptional reasons to alter the Green Belt to enable the suggested allocation.

Proposed business park. (Inspector's report pages 5 - 7 and 5 - 8, paras 5.36 to 5.44.) It is noted the inspector had proposed no modification regarding 35 hectares of land bounded by the M53/A55/A41 and Guilden Sutton Lane. The Council concurs and agrees that the plan for a corporate headquarters, business centre, office village or other development should be rejected. The Council agrees that 'any alteration to the Green Belt must be justified through exceptional circumstances and be minor in extent.' It is noted the inspector 'finds no view for dissenting from the views of the Chester: The Future of an Historic City study that the A 41 marks a firm key edge.' Development of this site would significantly erode the openness of the Green Belt, contrary to the main objective of the designation.

Land Between Ranelagh and The Wood, School Lane/land at Firwood, adjacent to playing field, Guilden Sutton Lane. (proposed modifications p52, me 49.) It is noted that these two areas are not to be included as green space but will be covered by Green Belt policy ENV 63 p 125 and HO4-7, p 235 - p240. The Council wishes to point out there are no longer any sites in Guilden Sutton which are suitable for groups of dwellings.

When 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.

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 cycleway on the former Mickle Trafford - Shotton railway line 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. The latter would most probably be achieved by means of an access from the cycleway at Mannings Lane South. The extension of the cycle way to Guilden Sutton and Mickle Trafford will cost in the region of £500,000 and at the time of writing there were differing views on whether or not this sum had been allocated by the North West Development Agency. Clarification was being sought.

Details of the Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan which has recently been published are awaited. 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.

Recently, the County Council has announced a partial review of the County Structure Plan to which the Council is responding. The plan contains policies on the amount and general location of land for new homes, businesses, shops and leisure facilities and also sets out measures to protect and enhance Cheshire's environment and to improve the transport network. The consultation, which runs until 19 May, 2004, is an important part of the process and is for everyone with an interest in Cheshire's future including residents and local groups and organisations.

In Chester, the district is said to need 3,300 additional homes up to 2016 to meet growth in the number of households in the area. Housing development will be focused in the urban area with provision in the rural area to meet local needs. Affordable housing is included and measures to improve accessibility to Chester. Details can be seen in Chester Library and further information can be obtained from the County Council on 01244 603175 or by e-mail to structureplan@cheshire.gov.uk.

Publications and information considered during the year included:

Chester District Local Plan, modifications.

Structure Plan Review, supplementary consultation period

Cheshire County Structure Plan review

Cheshire Household Waste Management Strategy

Leisure services

Parish playing field.

The Council is pleased that the parish playing field on Guilden Sutton Lane continues to be a popular and well used local facility. As a result of a successful grant application to the City Council it was possible to progress the intention to provide a basketball net and surfacing for youths using the field. At the suggestion of the grounds maintenance contractor, action was taken to eradicate an infestation of moles. A sign was provided urging users of the field to show consideration to neighbours. Some wear and tear has occurred to the playing surface and this is to be rectified by the grounds maintenance contractor. Consideration is also being given to the provision of a litter bin.

Publications and information considered during the year included:

Cheshire County Playing Fields Association -

Annual report 2002/2003.

Newsletter

The Playing Field

Play Area.

The damage caused to the slide in the children's play area in summer 2002 gave rise to great disappointment to children who use the playground, parents who take an active interest in fund-raising for improvements and the Parish Council which devotes considerable resources to the maintenance of the play area and to seeking grants towards the cost of high quality safety surfacing, equipment and other facilities.

The delay in repairs to the slide has been partly due to the original supplier now being located in Australia and to a wish by the Council to consider an upgrade to all the equipment in the play area which has now been in place for a number of years and does not offer best play value or meet more modern safety standards.

The Parish Council is greatly encouraged by parents and others who support the play area through fund raising and is actively considering further improvements. The safety surfacing and see saw together with the front fencing and gate were replaced in 2002. Thought is now being given to the provision of additional seating, perhaps inside and outside the play area.

Thanks to a great deal of effort by Cllr Julie Proudlove, suitable replacement equipment has been identified. Agreement has been given to the installation of that for preschool age children this summer, towards which a City Council grant of £2,500 has been obtained. The replacement of the multi-purpose item for primary school-age children is dependent on further grants and these are being sought from Chester City Council, WREN and the National Lottery Awards for All scheme. Should these applications be successful, the second phase of the refurbishment will proceed as quickly as possible.

Parents, residents or groups who have any thoughts about how the best use could be made of the play area are more than welcome to contact Cllr Proudlove or any Member of the Council.

The provision of CCTV to monitor any anti social behaviour in the play area was mentioned at this meeting last year and the Council is a very pleased this appears to have had an effect. The project was achieved by the Parish Council in partnership with Guilden Sutton Community Association and with financial support from the Association, Chester City Council and fund raisers led by Cllr Proudlove. The Council was extremely grateful to the Community Association for its support for the scheme and to the Association, the City Council and fund raisers for their generous financial backing which helped the project become a reality.

Guilden Sutton is judged to be deficient in all forms of open space and play provision and the Council hopes the community will not hesitate to assist in providing information which may help to ensure that so far as is possible the facilities which are available are not abused in this manner and that those responsible for any damage are required to meet the cost of repairs.

The formal annual safety inspection of the play area is now arranged for the Parish Council by Chester City Council. A basic visual inspection is carried out by Members of the Parish Council on a weekly basis. In this connection, two Members have received basic training from RoSPA and a standard checklist is being devised for all inspections.

Publications and information considered during the year included:

Report of annual inspection 2003

Public footpaths

The Council is most grateful for the sterling efforts of Mr Brian Lewin, Parish Paths Warden and the Parish Paths Group for the invaluable work they carry out in maintaining and promoting the network of public paths within the parish.

By far the most high-profile footpaths issue to arise during the year was the proposal by Cheshire County Council to upgrade the status of public footpath No. 7, the green lane on the boundary of Guilden Sutton and Mickle Trafford parishes to a byway open to all traffic. This proposal emerged after the County Council's Public Rights of Way Unit was asked to consider the status of public footpath No. 1 on the boundary of Mickle Trafford and Hoole Village parishes in connection with the proposal to extend the cycleway to Guilden Sutton and Mickle Trafford. The County Council has a duty to maintain the definitive map taking account of evidence which it discovers and public footpath No. 7 appears on the same maps dating back to the mid 19th century as public footpath No. 1. For this reason, the County Council insisted it had no option but to proceed to an order upgrading the status of public footpath No. 7. The Rights of Way Officer is obliged to proceed on the basis of the evidence which has been discovered and is unable to take arguments as to suitability into account. A strong objection was put forward by the Parish Council, reproduced beneath in summary. Representations have also been made to the Minister via Mrs Christine Russell MP on the basis the order has proceeded during a consultation by the Government into the use of byways open to all traffic by mechanically propelled vehicles on the basis the routes were shown as highways on maps which predate the discovery of the internal combustion engine. The issue is likely to be decided at a public inquiry but the County Council has agreed to consider the possibility of a traffic regulation order which would prevent the use of public footpath No. 7 by mechanically propelled vehicles. The order is likely to be advertised during the summer and all residents of the parish have the opportunity to make representations but those based on suitability are unlikely to carry weight with the inspector.

Green Lane, public footpath 7, Guilden Sutton

Proposed upgrading to byway open to all traffic.

1 Guilden Sutton Parish Council OBJECTS to the proposed upgrading of this footpath to a byway open to all traffic.

2 The Parish Council opposes this recommendation for the reasons set out by the Minister in his foreword to the consultation document considered at agenda item 5 of the meeting of 26 January 2004. We also believe it is premature.

3 There is considerable frustration that this recommendation has arisen at all. It comes before you simply because Guilden Sutton 7, otherwise known as Green Lane, appears on the same maps as Hoole/Mickle Trafford 1, otherwise known as Garners Lane, part of which is to be used as a safe route to school. This scheme is being promoted both by the County Council and Guilden Sutton Parish Council and we are pleased that funding is now in place which will enable it to proceed. The further extension of the Sustrans cycleway to Station Lane, Mickle Trafford, which is now part of the scheme, will considerably reduce any need for a change in the status of Guilden Sutton 7.

4 The Parish Council was first notified of the proposal to upgrade the status of Guilden Sutton 7 in October, 2003 and a recommendation was placed before the committee at your last meeting, a timescale of less than four months. Might I draw your attention to the milestone targets statement published by the Rights of Way Unit in Cheshire Signpost summer 2003 which contains at least 13 references to constraints on staff or financial resources, beginning on the first page where there is a reference to no less than 44 applications on record for which investigations had yet to be started. This was the same number outstanding as the previous year. The Parish Council is mystified that this recommendation has proceeded with such great expedition when a great many other applications which possibly predate it appear to be outstanding. Given it is understood there is sufficient opposition to this recommendation to suggest a public inquiry is likely, it is difficult to see why it has been progressed so urgently.

5 The Parish Council strongly believes a decision should be deferred as the Minister's consultations are not yet concluded. These could lead to measures which would remove the possibility of routes which may have never been used by mechanically propelled vehicles being opened up to these vehicles purely on the basis of historical evidence as to their existence. The Minister has already rehearsed the anxieties to which the present situation gives rise and it does seem strange to us that the County Council should be seeking to open up the possibility of mechanically propelled vehicles using these routes when evidence suggests a problem has been identified with this and action is likely. The County Council rightly prides itself on its excellent status and this does not seem to us to sit comfortably with a decision to pre-empt the outcome of consultations which could well deal with the objections which have arisen.

6 In addition, consultations have yet to begin on draft deposit alterations in connection with the structure plan review which include arguments produced by the County Planning Officer which appear to be devastating in terms of their support for the Parish Council's position. To quickly paraphrase, there is reference to the need to safeguard, manage and promote footpaths, bridleways and cycleways within the county. There follows in bold type a proposed policy which says that footpaths, bridleways and cycleways will be established, improved and protected. There is no reference to the introduction of BOATS.

In a following paragraph there appear words which underline the Parish Council's view that a decision should be deferred. These state:

'The aim is to create a county wide network for walkers horse riders and cyclists appropriate to current and future needs and safeguarding the traditional character of established routes.'

The introduction of a BOAT we would argue in the strongest possible terms can hardly be expected to safeguard the traditional character of an established route.

7 Conclusion. The Parish Council believes a decision today would be premature in view of the fact that important consultations by both the Minister and the County Council itself which fundamentally affect the character of this route are yet to be concluded. Given the County Council would have a duty to maintain the surface in a safe condition for the users entitled to use the byway, it would also give the opportunity for the cost of any necessary improvements and ongoing maintenance to be considered set against restrictions on the County Council's budget. Importantly it would also enable the detail of the safe route to school to be settled.

Should the committee be minded to proceed to an order, we would argue in the strongest possible terms that a traffic regulation order for Guilden Sutton 7 should proceed at the same time.'

Parish councillors were consulted on the definitive map of public footpaths in the parish. Detailed plans were provided by the County's Public Right of Way Unit and these were being considered by Cllr Hughes Mr Lewin. The Parish Council indicated it would be pleased to have any comments from residents on the seven footpath routes in the parish.

Publications and information considered during the year included:

Mid Cheshire Footpath Society annual report

Mid Cheshire Footpath Society walks programme

Cheshire Signpost.

Rights of Way improvement plan.

Grounds maintenance.

The Parish Council lets an annual contract as specified beneath, for grounds maintenance and amenity cleansing within the parish. Regular meetings are held with the contractor to ensure performance against specification.

^ Grounds maintenance 2004.

(i) playing field, Guilden Sutton Lane.

(a) grass cutting throughout the season to appropriate height to allow informal use.

(b) cut growth on roadside verge and in roadside ditch as necessary during season.

(c) one no annual cut to roadside hedge (two sides and top) and to field rear hedge (front face and top only).

(d) one no annual clearance to roadside ditch.

(ii) play area off Hill Top Road.

(a) cutting of boundary hedging as necessary sufficient to allow safe use of adjoining play equipment.

(b) control of weeds in boundary hedging using approved herbicide.

(c) removal of litter from safety surfacing and border.

(iii) parish car park, Church Lane.

(a) cutting of grass throughout the season sufficient to maintain a tidy appearance.

(b) maintenance of boundary planting to car park and control of weeds using approved herbicide.

(iv) lengthsman duties.

(a) weekly scavenging of the following areas, two hours per week (104 hours):

playing field (Guilden Sutton Lane), dell amenity area (Oaklands), childrens play area, Fox Cover amenity area, parish car park (to include sweeping where necessary), Village Hall car park (to include sweeping where necessary), surrounds to Village Hall.

(b) additional amenity cleansing as requested (envisaged maximum 96 hours.)

Please quote an hourly rate.'

Provision for youth.

Inquiries are being made by Cllr Paterson as to possible provision for youth within the parish.

Public transport

Cllr 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 and supported by Cheshire County Council, continues to run despite indications it would be ceased in due course due to low patronage. Its future remains in some doubt in the light of County Council reductions in the light of rising contract costs 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 Cllr J R Boughton who both strongly supported the initiative. All local residents are urged to patronise the service as its future rests on a 'use it or lose it' basis.

The Clerk reported the receipt, by letter dated 22 May 2003 of advice from the County Transport Co-ordination Service of proposals to withdraw the service 39 from Guilden Sutton to Christleton County High School. The possible withdrawal of the service led to 16 objections from members of the public, supported by Guilden Sutton, Mickle Trafford and Christleton Parish Councils and by the High School. The service, operated by Arrowebrook Coaches for Cheshire Bus, departed Guilden Sutton at 8.15am, returning at 3.35pm. According to a report, the service carried 36 passengers a day and cost £19,344 a year at a cost for each passenger of £2.79. Transport Co-ordinators suggested the only alternative would be for pupils to travel by bus to either the city centre or to Vicars Cross and change buses to reach the school.

Chester City Transport director Stuart Hyslop told Chester's District Public Transport Liaison Committee, however, that the Vicars Cross option was not viable. Objectors told the County Council they believed the withdrawal of the service would increase congestion in the morning and early afternoon as parents delivered and collected their children. They also felt it was inappropriate for children to be expected to cross the busy A51 at peak times. The liaison committee agreed to support the withdrawal of the service although transport coordinators accepted there were 'a relatively high number of objections.' The County Council decided the service should be retained until December to enable discussions on a possible parent funded alternative.

More recently, a decision has been taken that a journey on the service 54 which operates on weekdays through the village to Chester, departing Elton at 0725, will be withdrawn in mid July. Operated by Chester City Transport, the contract costs £3,133 and attracts 1,820 passenger trips a year, an average of seven a day. The cost per passenger trip is £1.72.

The Council endeavours to obtain accurate timetable information about services to and from the village although it is not consulted by the operators about changes. Discussions are in progress with Cheshire Community Council and the County Transport Co-ordination Service as to the possibility of a local timetable leaflet for the parish, to be delivered to each household, funded by Parish Transport Grant.

At the request of a resident, the Council is endeavouring to secure seating for the parish bus shelters although disappointingly, the contractors concerned appeared to be reluctant to estimate for the work. The Council is pleased an acceptable alternative has been devised by a local contractor and seating is to be installed in the near future.

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

The poor condition of the former rural transport information point on the village hall car park was brought to the attention of the County Transport Co-ordination Service which agreed that out of date information could be removed.

Passengers alighting at the bus stand on Guilden Sutton Lane from incoming services to the village have complained that as they prepare to cross the road, their view of oncoming traffic is impeded by an overgrown hedge. The hedge in question is actually in Mickle Trafford and District Parish and discussions have led to agreement that some work will be done to trim the hedge and improve visibility.

Publications and information considered during the year included:

Chester District Public Transport liaison committee - agenda and minutes.

Stored value Travelcard

Public transport map and guide.

Bus information strategy for Cheshire

Parish and town council bus shelter scheme

Highways - strategic

Major maintenance costing £1.2m is to be carried out this summer on the A 51 between the A 55 and Tarvin roundabout. The scheme was deferred from 2003. During these works, one way traffic will be maintained into Chester. Diversion routes for outbound traffic will be signed. The Parish Council has been consulted by the highway authority on the possible implications of this work and the Council has requested there should be a 30 mph speed limit on the whole length of Wicker Lane in view of the volume of diversionary traffic this road could be expected to attract.

The first phase of the work, involving kerbs and footways, will be carried out between 1 June and 20 July. This will involve a two way traffic system with a single lane for works traffic. Right turns on the A 51 will be maintained during peak periods. There may be some overnight use of temporary traffic signals. The work is to be carried out seven days a week, possibly with a 24 hour working and the road will have a 30 mph speed limit.

Phase 2 of the work, from 20 July to 12 September, will involve the reconstruction of the carriageway itself. The road will only be open to traffic travelling towards Chester and traffic leaving the city will be diverted using other A roads and/or motorways. As before, the work is to be carried out seven days a week, possibly with 24 hour working. During this phase of the work, it is expected that Hare Lane, Guiden Sutton Lane, School Lane and Wicker Lane will be used as local access routes to Littleton.

Highways - local

The A41/Guiden 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 repeatedly been expressed at the actions of a minority of drivers emerging from Guiden 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 have arisen in the past as to the misuse of this junction particularly on Sundays by traffic unfamiliar with the crossing proceeding to and from the Sunday market at the Rugby Club. These were referred to the highway authority and following a site meeting with County Cllr J E Burke, it was agreed that enhanced markings should be provided at the junction and in the gap in the central reservation of the A 41 in an attempt to deter this dangerous practice. This was carried out during the year together with an improvement to the kerb line at the junction of Guiden Sutton Lane and Hare Lane to assist left turning traffic.

In connection with proposed major maintenance of the A 51 between the A 55 and Tarvin in Summer 2004, which is expected to lead to diversion traffic along Wicker Lane, a request has accepted by the highway authority to introduce a 30 mph speed limit on the whole length of the road during the duration of the work. A request has also been submitted for traffic conditions on the road, where renewed concerns have arisen as to the speed of vehicles and an increase in the numbers of heavy goods lorries, to be considered by the County Council's speed review panel.

Following a recent road traffic accident, a request has been made for 'slow' markings to be placed in the vicinity of Annie Hughes Hill at the approach to Church Lane.

A scheme for larger direction signs to the Village Hall to assist visitors from outside the parish was previously agreed, with the help of a grant from Chester City Council. The installation of the signs, which also provide directions to the shops, was delayed due to pressure of work within the highway authority but was completed during the year.

There has been no progress with the request for a crossing from Hoole to Guiden Sutton Lane, put forward by a Hoole resident, which was supported by the Council.

As reported last year, the Council was concerned that the County Council, without consultation, proposed to delete a number of local schemes from the minor improvements list. The Clerk reported the Council had been informed, by letter dated 15 May 2003 that the local joint committee for highways and transportation had recommended that all approvals gained prior to the local transport plan process relating to the list of minor improvement schemes should be rescinded. The former minor improvement list and the comments of the parish councils concerned would be retained to inform the development of future local transport plan proposals. The schemes involved in Guiden Sutton were: improvement to the Station Lane/School Lane junction, the provision of a footway on School Lane by The Lodge, the realignment and widening of Wicker Lane at the approach to the A 51 and the widening of Wicker Lane together with a visibility improvement at Church Lane. The Council's wish for these schemes to be retained was reiterated to County Cllr J E Burke.

The Council reported last year that a request had been made to the police for a speed check to be carried out on Guiden Sutton Lane and School Lane but this had been declined on the basis that resources are concentrated on those roads with a poor accident record. As an alternative, the Council made a successful application to the City Council's Goway North Area Committee for the use of a speed trailer which was deployed on School Lane and Guiden Sutton Lane early in the new year. The Council was extremely disappointed to note that a majority of vehicles proceeded at speeds in excess of the limit including those carrying schoolchildren to and from school. The highest speed recorded in the 30 mph limit was 56 mph. The outcome of the survey was reported to the highway authority and to the police.

The Council was pleased to have an indication from County Cllr J E Burke that due to concerns as to the speed of traffic within the parish, suitable village gateway

markings would have priority in 2004/05.

The Council was pleased to report last year that verges in Arrowcroft Road which were prone to damage due to parking had been hardened. The verges on Guiden Sutton Lane were also reported to the highway authority for consideration for appropriate measures but were not accepted at this stage.

A traffic regulation order was imposed on Guiden Sutton Lane and Hare Lane introducing a temporary 30mph limit from 3 November, 2003 to enable maintenance work to be carried out to trees on adjoining highway land.

During the year, a request was made for the imposition of a 50 mph limit on the A41 past the junction with Guiden Sutton Lane. It is understood the accident record on of the A41 between Upton and Sainsburys roundabout is to be reviewed and a lower speed limit may be the outcome.

Following an approach to the Parish Council, the highway authority was successfully persuaded by Cllr Julie Proudlove to provide appropriate signs at suitable locations within the parish advising drivers of the presence of horse riders and horse drawn vehicles. The installation of the signs has been delayed but is expected in late May.

The results of an assessment of a possible environmental traffic calming scheme put forward in the village were reported to Chester's local joint committee for highways and transportation. The scheme, on Oaklands, appeared in a list of 87 requests across Chester district which had been assessed taking account of vehicle speeds and flows, personal injury accidents and environmental factors. According to a report, Oaklands was ranked 78th in priority with 6.5 points. It is therefore unlikely to be implemented.

Other issues which have been considered include:

Guiden Sutton Lane - standard of street lighting
Cathcart Green - parking
Wicker Lane - condition of footway in the vicinity of Guiden Sutton Methodist Church

Reinstatement of slow markings - Guiden Sutton Lane/Station Lane
Station Lane - poor drainage in wet weather conditions

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

Highways and Transportation LJC for Chester, minutes and agenda.

2003/04 Winter gritting routes

Road safety campaign

Street Lighting.

Street lighting faults continue to be reported although in the last 12 months these have been fewer than usual. These can be reported by any resident at any time by telephoning the number and location of the light concerned to the Guiden Sutton highway office on 01244 603475.

During the year, the Council requested that street lighting should be installed on the A41 to benefit the junction with Guiden Sutton Lane. A response is awaited.

Finance

On finance, the Council has decided to change its approach. In recent years there has been a policy of deficit budgeting to return balances to the community. Annual expenditure has also been rising as additional services and facilities have been provided and other costs have increased. Some action had already been taken to more closely match income and expenditure. It was clear the Council should at least aim to have a balanced budget in order to build up reserves for major expenditure such as any future replacement of the equipment in the children's play area and similar major projects. For 2003/04 the budget had been held at £11,110. For 2004/05 there was a small increase to £11,338. In line with the new approach, the Council increased its precept to the same figure in order to match income and expenditure. This entailed an increase from the previous year's figure of £10,300.

At present, the precept is approximately £1.50 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 2003/04 for example, the Council was successful in attracting valuable external funding of £2,500 towards the first phase of proposed improvements including the children's play area. The Council is also reimbursed by the City Council for approximately 50% of the cost of the village lengthsman.

The Parish Council said: 'A number of years ago, the Council built up balances to pay for legal and technical advice which it thought might be needed in connection with the building of the A55 dual carriageway through the parish. In the event, many of the problems were resolved by agreement and most of the expense was not incurred. Since then, the Council has been in effect returning these balances to local council taxpayers by subsidising the budget and raising a precept which was less than its expenditure. The Council has also been successful in obtaining a number of grants which have enabled the cost of its activities to be less than they otherwise might have been. Councillors have now agreed, however, that it is sensible to match income and expenditure in order to build up the large sum of money which will be required, for example, when the play area next requires a major refurbishment.'

The Council is pleased that the City Council is conducting a review of the double taxation anomaly whereby, for example, council taxpayers in Guilden Sutton fund the cost of provision of the children's play area and the parish playing field in addition to making a contribution to similar facilities in Grosvenor Park.

The Council believes on the basis of an initial analysis that 25% of its overall budget could qualify for relief if the outcome of the review leads to changes in the system.

The Council's detailed budget for 2004/05 is shown beneath.

In 2003/04 the Council was again successful in attracting valuable external funding for local improvements. In recent years, the record is:

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

Chester City Council £3,500 - (total of two grants) allocated to the play area

Chester City Council £500 - (total of two grants) 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

Chester City Council £200 - allocated to the Village Hall signing scheme

Chester City Council £1,056 - allocated to the CCTV scheme

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

The Council has also been pleased to receive magnificent donations from fund raisers, parents and the Guilden Sutton Community Association which have been applied or will be used for improvements to the children's play area and towards the cost of the CCTV scheme installed at the Village Hall.

Audit. 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 believed 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 had been a welcome reduction in the audit fee. The audit regulations had subsequently changed again in that the more rigorous requirements falling on smaller councils such as Guilden Sutton were lifted by the Government with effect from 1st April, 2001. Although 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, audit fees have continued to fall. The change 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 have greater responsibilities for ensuring the appropriate procedures are in place and are fully complied with.

In 2002/03 the Council had a clean audit. The figures on the annual return comprised:

	31 March 2002	31 March 2003
Balances brought forward	10946	10606
Annual precept	9925	10300

Other receipts	2513	4189
Staff costs	2025	2775
Loan interest/repayments	NIL	NIL
Other payments	10753	12908
Balances c/f	10606	9412
Cash/investments	10606	9412
Fixed assets	36140	40011
Borrowings	NIL	NIL



Donations. In line with policy, requests for funding from the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, the Samaritans, the Chester Cathedral Song School Appeal, the Army Cadet Force in the North West and the North West Air Ambulance were declined.

Financial documents considered by the Council during the year included:

CATPCs

Banking arrangements for Parish Councils

Lighter touch audit questionnaire

2003/04 national salary award for Local Council Clerks.

Cheshire County Council

Funding for Communities Conference

Statement of accounts 2002/03

Chester City Council

Maintenance of churchyards

Grant aid to the voluntary and community sector 2003 - 2004

Cheshire Community Council

Vital Villages Initiative

Parish Transport Grants scheme

Rural Opportunities Fund

Local Network Fund

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

depreciated. A note in the newsletter pointed out the legislation is now tighter and penalties have increased. The dog warden also makes out of hours inspections. Action by the City Council to deal with dog fouling is fully supported by the Parish Council. An additional bin for the reception of canine faeces was installed on Guilden Sutton Lane following a request from a resident.

Further mass planting of daffodils has taken place on Guilden Sutton Lane.

The City Council amenity cleansing schedule is supplemented as necessary by the 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 are maintained to a higher standard. The Parish Council is most grateful to Chester City Council for its continued support in tackling the difficult problem of litter and unsightly refuse dumping which reflects the position of the parish on the urban fringe and also problems with blown litter from the A 41 and A 55. 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.

The Parish Council was quick off the mark when it was announced at the City Council's Gowy North Area Committee which covers Guilden Sutton that a modest quantity of sacks would be available for use in connection with the green waste wheelie bins. The sacks were made available by the Parish Council. The Council also requested the City Council to extend the season for fortnightly collections as many occupiers regularly have more garden waste to be collected than will fit in their wheelie bin.

Commenting on the village generally, the Parish Council said: 'Guilden Sutton is often described by estate agents as 'much sought after' for all sorts of different reasons. One reason undoubtedly is the effort made by the Parish Council, many residents and organisations such as the churches, the primary school and Guilden Sutton Community Association, to try to ensure the village looks as well kept and tidy as possible. Councillors are grateful to Gresty, based at Wood Farm, which is employed to keep various parts of the village tidy on a weekly basis and to occupiers who look after the verges outside their properties and remove any litter or weeds they may find. Keep up the good work!'

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. The Council is most grateful to former Cllr Michael Gartland who continues to act as Parish Tree Warden.

The encroachment of a number of boundary hedges and shrubs onto the footway was noted by the Council and a suitable note was included in the newsletter. Councillors thanked those occupiers who ensured their boundary hedges, shrubs and trees did not obstruct the footway, particularly during the growing season when it can be difficult to keep pace. Trimming was also helpful for those passers by with prams and pushchairs or in wheelchairs who might otherwise have to resort to the road. For the blind or partially sighted, an unwelcome encounter with an overhanging branch in wet weather was best avoided.

The Council was informed of a proposal to fell a beech tree at The Vicarage. No objection was raised subject to a suitable replacement being planted.

Further shrubs were planted to complete the hedging at the rear of the memorial garden

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.

Cllr Armitage has continued as a member of the executive committee of the County Association. 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.

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

Annual conference and exhibition, 3 - 5 October 2003.

Annual meeting Thursday 9 October 2003

Basic induction session 30 July 2003

Cheshire County Training Partnership programme 2003 – 2004

Direct Information Service

Local Council Review

Meeting re local government review, Thursday 5 February, 2004

Memorandum of understanding with the Cheshire Constabulary

Model charter

Newsletter

Quality Parish Council conference Monday 29 March 2004

Quality Parish Councils and training in Cheshire, seminar, Byley Village Hall, Thursday

5 June 2003

Royal Garden Party 6 July, 2004, nomination

Training update

Vital Villages update Autumn 2003

World Rural Women's Day 15 October 2003

(b) Chester City Council.

The Council has been grateful to City Cllrs 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 Gowy North Area Committee covering the parish. The Council was also most grateful to the City Council for arranging for a familiarisation visit to the local planning authority which enabled Members to gain an understanding of the procedures involved.

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

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

Annual independent inspection of children's play areas

Area committee dates available on website

Area working in Chester District, launch event Monday 31 March 2003

Awards for All Lottery funding programme

Best value review for public space

Changes to National Lottery funding and licensing

Cheshire West local health scrutiny committee

Chester Archaeology annual report

Chester Community Safety Partnership

Chester in Partnership Review, 23 September 2003

Chester International Links Association, newsletter.

City Council minutes

Consumption of alcohol in public places

Cultural Partnership Forum

Election 1 May 2003 - result of poll, Christleton ward.

Environmental Forum

Ethics and Standards committee

Ethics and Standards Committee annual report

Gowy North Area Committee

Highways and transportation local joint committee

Lady Mayoress's holiday fund for children, Garden Party, Saturday 6 September 2003

Leader+ Newsletter.

Local Government Review

New cultural strategy

Parish Bulletin

Parish contact list

Parish Partnership Reception, Wednesday 19 November 2003

Parish Plans

Planning authority newsletter

Refuse collections, Bank Holiday periods

Review of allotments service.

Rt Worshipful the Lord Mayor's Civic Service, Chester Cathedral.

Rural small firms and rural village shops grant schemes

Street Orderly, grant aid scheme 2003/04, rates of pay.

The Key

The Past Uncovered

(c) Cheshire County Council.

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

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

County Council reports and other documents received by the Council during the year for consultation or information included:

2004 Annual Town and Parish Councils conference 21 January 2004.

A to Z guide

Annual Town and Parish Councils conference 21 January 2004.

Appointment of Partnership Officer

Archives and Local Studies Newsletter

Archives and Local Studies Newsletter

Cheshire Environment newsletter

Cheshire Household Waste Management Strategy

Chester Area Committee

Chester Matters newsletter

Chester Matters newsletter

Consultation on draft planning charter

Consultation on draft equine policy

Elected regional assemblies and local government reviews

Road safety campaign poster.

Statement of accounts 2002/03.

Step back into Cheshire, 18 - 19 September

Summer drink driving campaign

The Environmental Planning Service

Winter gritting routes.

(d) Cheshire Community Council.

The Parish Council would be pleased to receive views on the parish 's entry in the Cheshire Best Kept Village Competition having again decided there was insufficient support to participate in 2004. Marks in previous years, although no worse than average, had highlighted that a number of aspects need to be improved including the extent of community involvement.

The participation of Guilpen Sutton in the village design statement and parish transport grant schemes is to be revisited. The village design statement process in particular, although bringing benefits in terms of influencing development control matters within the parish, requires considerable input and consultation within the community.

Reports and documents received for consideration included:

A New Historical Atlas of Cheshire

Annual general meeting 17 September 2003

Annual Report 2002/2003

Cheshire Cauldron

Cheshire Local Authority Support Programme Newsletter

Cheshire Rural Forum

Cheshire Rural Forum community safety seminar 1 April, 2003, Winsford.

Cheshire Rural Trust

Christmas Open Day 15 December 2003

Community Pride Competition 2004

Local Heritage Initiative

Local network fund for children and young people

Nominations for Trustees

Parish Transport Grants scheme

Rural Opportunities Fund

Village Design Statement project.

Vital Villages update

CPRE

The Council has continued in membership of the CPRE and was represented at the annual general meeting of the Chester District.

Documents and other information considered during the year included:

Cheshire branch annual report 2002

Cheshire News

Chester District Newsletter

Countryside Voice

Expanding airports destroy the countryside campaign

Government transport planning

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill.

Planning Update

Quiet Lanes pack

Rural Matters

TCG Newsletter

Policing

The Parish Council was pleased to welcome PC Rob Boulton who succeeded PC Michael Powell. We look forward to a long and successful relationship with PC Boulton. PC Boulton has attended a number of meetings of the Parish Council to discuss policing matters and has also undertaken high-profile patrolling of the parish accompanied by Parish Councillors and the Clerk. It was noted that warning notices had been issued to do with inappropriate parking on a Guilden Sutton Lane. Generally, Guilden Sutton is seen as a relatively peaceful village although there have in the past been isolated instances of anti social behaviour in the vicinity of the play area and the Village Hall car park.

The Council is pleased the new CCTV equipment installed on the Village Hall has had beneficial effect with fewer complaints from residents of anti social behaviour in the area.

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

Cheshire Custody Visiting Scheme.

Cheshire Police annual report

Cheshire Police Authority annual report

Cheshire Police Authority consultation.

Cheshire Police Forum Agenda and Minutes

Chester custody visiting scheme.

Chester Police Forum dates 2004/ 05.

Lost/found property survey

Project Rural Matters

Project Rural Matters Newsletter No. 1

Project Rural Matters open day Tuesday 27 January 2004

Primary school.

Councillor Fisher has continued as the Parish Council's nomination to the governing body of Guilden Sutton Church of England Controlled Primary School and has reported on issues affecting the school. The Council was pleased to support a planning application for extensions to the school to provide additional accommodation for the existing number of pupils.

Parliamentary Boundaries.

A strong objection was raised by the Parish Council to a proposal by Mrs C M Russell MP to transfer the Chester City Council ward of Christleton, which includes Guilden Sutton, from the City of Chester parliamentary constituency to the Eddisbury parliamentary constituency in order to move to parity in numbers of electors. The proposal was opposed by the Parish Council at a public hearing and dismissed by an assistant commissioner. A summary of the Parish Council's response appears beneath.

Review of Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries – City of Chester

The Council wishes to object in the strongest possible terms to the proposal by Mrs C M Russell MP (City of Chester) to remove from that constituency that part of Guilden Sutton civil parish outside the line of the A55 trunk road and transfer it to the Eddisbury parliamentary constituency. The Council would oppose any proposal which would fragment the community by a divisive alteration of the parish boundary to the detriment of its identity or effective and convenient government or which would remove any other part of the parish from the City of Chester constituency. In summary, there is no affinity whatsoever between Guilden Sutton civil parish and the parliamentary constituency of Eddisbury. Residents pay their council tax to and are administered by principal authorities based in Chester. In local government terms it would be totally unacceptable and utterly confusing to have an elected parish council administering a parish the greater part of which would be in one parliamentary constituency with which it has no community of interest and the remainder smaller part in another with which it has an extremely strong community of interest. The Council therefore argues the proposal should be rejected. Had Mrs Russell consulted locally, she would have found that very few, if any, residents are aware of the Eddisbury parliamentary constituency. That constituency covers a large area looking towards Winsford in distant Mid Cheshire whilst Guilden Sutton civil parish in all respects looks strongly in the opposite direction to Chester. Chester Town Hall and Chester Cathedral are easily visible less than three miles from the nearest point of the parish boundary.

Although at one time there may have been a milkman visiting from Eddisbury constituency, the Council is currently unaware of any local services provided to residents from that area. In total contrast, the following and many more services are derived from Chester:

Local government - Cheshire County Council/Chester City Council/Cheshire Community Council

Fire service, Police service

Health services - primary and acute including ambulance service, Social services

Central governments services - JobCentre, benefits, motor taxation office, driving tests.

Public transport - main bus services, railway station

Water supply, Sewage treatment

Publicly owned housing - Chester and District Housing Trust

Ecclesiastical - Bishop, Methodist minister for Guilden Sutton, Roman Catholic Church, United Reform Church

Education - secondary and tertiary

Voluntary bodies - County Federation of Women's Institutes, Chester district CPRE, The Samaritans, Civic Trust

Comparison shopping

Leisure facilities - theatres, sports centres and clubs, main swimming facilities, Chester City FC, Chester RUFC, swimming club, rowing, entertainment venues, choirs, City of Chester Brass Band.

It will therefore be clear beyond peradventure that Guilden Sutton is a Chester parish, is extremely proud to be a Chester parish with its residents identifying

strongly with Chester and looks upon Chester as its principal focus from which its services and employment derive. By no definition can Guilden Sutton's community of interest be argued to lay with the Eddisbury constituency. The Commission is asked to dismiss the proposal and retain the parliamentary boundary for the City of Chester constituency so far as it affects the Chester City Council Christleton ward as it is at present.

Elected regional assembly/Local Government Review.

Changes will be made to Cheshire's County and District councils if there is a 'yes' vote for an elected regional assembly in this autumn's referendum. All households were due to have had a leaflet from the Boundary Committee explaining the position but there is evidence this distribution was not successful. If there is a 'yes' vote for a regional assembly, both the County Council and Chester City Council would be abolished. Local government services in Cheshire would be provided by one or more unitary or all-purpose councils which would take on the functions of both the existing County and District councils. The Boundary Committee consulted on the possibility of there being one, two or three unitary councils for Cheshire. The County Council favours one unitary council for the whole county, the City Council prefers three, one of which would involve merging Chester City Council and Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council. Details of the arguments for the alternative options can be seen on the County Council and City Council websites.

Information is also available on the Boundary Committee's site. According to the Boundary Committee, the County and District councils in Cheshire at present cost £30m a year to be 'in business.'

A single unitary authority for the whole of Cheshire would cost £10.5m, two unitary authorities would cost £14.7m and three unitary authorities would cost £16.8m. The Parish Council formed no opinion apart from arguing that in any local arrangements to be introduced by the new authorities, parish councils should be properly represented with full voting rights.

Christmas lights competition

At the suggestion of Cllr P M Paterson, a small prize was awarded for the best Christmas lights decoration on a property within the parish. The Council has also agreed in future years to fund the provision of a Christmas tree within the Village Hall subject to the tree being displayed from 1 December onwards.

Information technology.

Councillor Fisher was pleased to report the village website had become the first in Cheshire to be hosted by the County Council under a new scheme which will lead to a modest reduction in running costs. The standard and content of the site has led to congratulations from a visitor from the United States

Royal Mail.

A successful request was made to the Royal Mail for the collection time from the box at the sub post office to be moved from 4.00 pm to 5.30 pm in line with the collection times from the smaller boxes on Guilden Sutton Lane.

Post office closures.

An objection was raised to the proposed closure of the Green Lane Post Office.

Other matters.

Other issues dealt with by the Council during the year including reports and correspondence considered by Councillors included:

Late delivery and/or damage to parcels to HM Forces in Iraq - raised with Mrs C M Russell MP

Fireworks damage to public property - raised with Mrs C M Russell MP

Boundary Committee - Local Government Review

Mrs C M Russell MP - progress of fireworks legislation

Cheshire Energy Efficient Advice Centre

Cheshire Fire Service - consultation.

Chester and District Housing Group - annual report 2003

Chester Citizens Advice Bureau - money advice service

Chester Volunteer Bureau - request for information.

Clerks and Councils Direct

Clerks and Councils Direct Suppliers Guide and Year Book 2004/05.

Countryside Agency - Parish Plans

DeFRA

Equine issues.

Good Councillors Guide.

Quality Parish Councils.

Rural services standard 2003

ODPM

Consultation paper on indemnities for relevant authority members and officers .

Post Office Ltd - Carry On Collecting presentation Friday 23 May, 2003

Society of Local Council Clerks - Quality Councils, regional one-day conference, Tuesday 8 July 2003

Standards Board for England

Local investigation of allegations of misconduct.

Revised guidance.

Standards Committee determinations, guidance for monitoring officers and standards committees.

The code in practice, IDeA guide for new members.

The Recycling Consortium - request for information.

The Village Retail Services Association - Helping Cheshire and Lancashire keep their village shops

Voluntary Voice

Volunteer Voice