

Holmes Chapel Partnership Annual General Meeting

Held on Wednesday 26th October 2011 at 7.30 p.m.
at the Victoria Club, Holmes Chapel

Partnership Attendees

Present: Jess Cragg (JC), Glyn Chambers (GC), Alison Dale (AD), Stuart Gammon (SG), Les Gilbert (LG), Phil Hargreaves (PH), Heather Jones (HJ), Hazel Sutcliffe (HS)

Apology: Jacqui Barton (JB)

Absent: David Savage (DS)

1. Minutes of Inaugural Meeting

The Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting held on the 12th January 2011 were approved.

There were no matters arising.

2. Election of Members

1. Honorary Members

- No members have resigned, so no open posts
- The standard term of office is 2 years, so no mandatory elections at this AGM

2. Ordinary Members

- The standard term of office is 1 years, so posts were electable
- No resignations, and no proposals for new member, so existing members continue in post

3. Chairman's Report

Stuart Gammon gave a summary of the past year's Partnership achievements, current projects and plans for the future.

1. A short history of the formation and purpose of the Partnership

2. Two projects completed successfully:

- U3A

Launched in November 2010, the U3A now has 347 members (increasing daily!) and 47 interest groups. Regular monthly meetings and events are held.

- Litter Bins

Thanks to the Village Volunteers and Streetscape there are now many new bins throughout the village, meaning a much cleaner look with less spillage

3. Current projects

- Cycling Village

Suggested route leaflets were published in June and work continues on improving routes and general cycle access.

A cycle shelter is planned to be erected adjacent to the Public Library (in the space between it and the public carpark) in the near future

- Playarea Improvements

The conceptual design for the Middlewich Playarea was shown at the Village Fair and Holmes Chapel Today events, and has since been shown to schools and playgroups for comment. The comments have been taken back to the developer (PMD) for adjustments to and costing of the design.

Once costs are received, the group will start fund raising with assistance from the Partnership.

- Christmas Fayre

The Partnership was planning a Christmas Fayre in the village centre for the afternoon and evening of Saturday 17th December. Unfortunately this has had to be cancelled as Cheshire East Highways have refused to close the stretch of London Road between the Red Lion and the mini-roundabouts 'on safety grounds' – despite having done something similar when the pavements were refurbished.

The Partnership also approached the Cooperative regarding closing their carpark for a similar period, but this was also refused as they 'would lose too much business'.

We will pick this up again next year and are determined to have a flagship event in December 2012 on the main road.

- Dane Valley Project

The Partnership applied for and got a grant of £1250 from the William Dean Trust to conduct a scientific survey of the area of the Dane Valley which is to be improved as a public leisure facility.

We are also working with the Parish Council on what is done in the area, suggesting such things as nature art (as done by the Ewe project in the Irish Republic), and other attractions to bring in visitors – rather than have a simple open area.

4. Other Activities

- Holmes Chapel Partnership Vision

We have been developing a Vision for the village – some creative thinking on how the village could look from an economic and cultural point of view in 5-10 years time.

- Traffic Management

We took part in the Public Meeting in June, presenting our views based on what is in the Parish Plan. We are expecting an update from Cheshire East Highways soon, which may include a number of short term measures to ease traffic problems.

- Local Development Framework

We have commented on the Local Development Framework – Cheshire East's vision of borough development over the next 10-15 years.

We have also commented on local developments on behalf of the community, e.g. the Sanofi-Aventis site.

4. Treasurer's Report

Phil Hargreaves covered the key elements of the Partnership's Finances this year (the Partnership works on a financial year starting 1st April)

1. Funding

- Cheshire East Council provided a total of £8000 from the Economic Regeneration Fund; of this £6000 was used to employ our Project Officer (Glyn Chambers) for one day a week, the rest used for general expenses
- The Parish Council provided a £1000 for general expenses

2. Grants

We applied for and received the following this year:

- £325 from IBM, which was used to purchase the Partnership notice board (on the Public Library wall)
- £3000 from Cheshire East's ERTG fund for the Cycling Village project; £625 was used to fund the cycling route leaflets (£225 was given by the advertisers towards costs), the remainder will be used to fund the cycle shelter
- £1250 from the William Dean Trust to fund a scientific survey of the Dane Valley

5. Guest Speakers

A. Home Grown in Holmes Chapel

Matt Skinner gave a presentation on the activities of the group, which was formed in May this year with the mission to encourage people to grow their own food, and buy locally sourced food in local shops. The idea is based on the **Incredible Edible** scheme set up in Todmorden, Yorkshire.

The group has just under 50 members, across all ages, and has set up a number of free-to-pick public fruit and vegetable patches in the village, notably the large one in front of the carpet shop. So far this year they have had 8 'digs', with a final one scheduled for November 5th.

The group had a successful Harvest fair on 1st October, which was attended by a large number of residents from the village.

Plans for 2012 include adding new areas (at the Railway Station, Vets, George & Dragon pub), as well as planting a community orchard near the play area in Elm Drive. They hope to put on further community events during the year.

B. Apples and Bears – Congleton Partnership projects

Patti Pinto gave a presentation on the Congleton Sustainability Group's (CSG) Apple Juice project. This started in 2009, following their seed/fruit swap when they wondered what could be done with excess apples. With the help of Eddisbury Fruit Farm in Kelsall the apples were pressed and the resulting juice bottled to be sold in Congleton; profits are ploughed back into the CSG's funds to help with other projects, such as planting orchards in local eco-schools

- In 2009, 450 kg of apples were collected and 106 75cl bottles produced
- In 2010, 3.2 tonnes of apples were collected, resulting in the production of 1820 bottles (including smaller bottles)

- The target for 2011 is 5 tonnes

As a result of this project the group was a joint winner of the Environment & Culture Award from Action from Market Towns.

Margaret Williamson, Chair of Congleton Partnership, then talked about other successes including the Congleton Bears.

6. The Way Forward

Glyn Chambers presented the Vision for the future, which the Partnership had recently produced and explained why this was important – without the Vision there would be no clear direction for Partnership community improvement activities, and very little would be achieved.

The key objectives of the vision were:

- A vibrant local economy
- An attractive place to be with places to meet and socialise with something for all ages
- It's on the map
- A recognised cultural centre.
- A model of environmental sustainability
- The countryside remains on its doorstep .

The Partnership will be starting to develop a joint vision with the Parish Council, to ensure we are working together for the benefit of the whole community, on 31st October.

7. Q&A Session / Any Other Business

1. Questions from the floor:

a. Will there be a skateboard park?

SG said that there was a plan to put a small skateboard park in the redesigned Middlewich Playarea, in the southwest corner (furthest away from the road and Bessancourt)

It was also possible that there could be a skateboard park provided as part of the leisure areas in the Sanofi-Aventis site redevelopment, although there are no specific plans at this stage.

b. With the increasing, ageing population in the village, would the Health Centre be expanding?

SG, supported by Les Gilbert, told the meeting that during discussions regarding the redevelopment of the Sanofi-Aventis (formerly Fisons) site in London Road, the Health Centre were offered the opportunity to bid for potential 'Section 106' funding from the developers to mitigate the effects on the community of the development. We understand that the GP Practice felt no additional facilities were required to support the resultant increase in population.

c. A representative of the Rotary Club (Dave Shakesby) asked whether the Partnership had spoken with Rotary regarding the proposed Christmas Fayre, and asked about the effect of its cancellation on the Rotary's children's singing/dancing event (on the morning of the same day)?

SG indicated that during the planning of the Fayre, the Partnership had discussions with John Berry, the organiser of the annual Rotary event. Consideration had been given to combining the two events, moving the Rotary event into the Fayre area on the afternoon, but this was discounted, at least for this year.

He apologised if the cancellation of the Partnership's Christmas Fayre had been taken to imply cancellation of the Rotary event.

d. What is happening to the Youth Club?

SG indicated that the Holmes Chapel Scouts Group had assigned an agreement to take over the building, previously used by the Youth Club. At the moment there are some refurbishment works to be done, including making the building suitable for Disabled access, for which the group are raising funds.

The Scout Group will be using the facilities most evenings, but intend to continue hiring rooms to interested groups and organisations – similar to what was previously done – in order to cover the costs of running the building.

2. There was a general discussion about the formation of a Business/Traders Group

- SG indicated that the Partnership were keen for traders and businesses to set up a Traders' Association.

This should be a self-help group where the members could, for instance, discuss how they might increase footfall in the village and thereby boost trade / use of their services (rather than people going outside if the village); they could also share experience on how to deal with landlords, etc..

Whilst it is very much the trader's/businesses remit to collectively help themselves, rather than expect the Council or other groups to do it, the Partnership is willing to help with advice on funding, etc. if required.

- Nigel Player (Simple PR) suggested that the naming of the group was important, to ensure that all businesses and services providers in the village were covered (if they want to be); so 'Traders Association' or 'Chamber of Commerce' may not be right. Nigel was happy to help set this group up (having a business himself); two other business owners also expressed an interest.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next Meeting due to be held on Wednesday 23rd November at 7.00 p.m. in the Committee Room at The Victoria Club.