

## **Item 6 - SLCC Training Day**

### **Sector Innovation**

**A Report on a Presentation by the Clerk to Holmes Chapel Parish Council  
16 August 2017 – SLCC Northern Region Training Day – Barnsley, Yorkshire**

#### **Introduction**

The Clerk began by setting the scene: Holmes Chapel is a village in Cheshire with a population of approximately 6,000 and the parish council's principal authority is Cheshire East. Following the adoption of Cheshire East's Local Plan, the parish's Neighbourhood Plan was approved and adopted in May 2017. The remainder of the presentation focussed on a large and ambitious project that the parish council had undertaken

#### **Sanofi Aventis Sports & Social Club**

Sanofi Aventis, once a major employer in the area, once owned a Sports & Social Club, intended for use by their staff, in the area. Use of the facilities was also extended to members of the local community. Over the years the number of staff employed by Sanofi Aventis had reduced from 600 to 200.

When the parish council heard several years ago that the Sports & Social Club was going to close they decided that they wanted to save the facility for the community and made an offer for the site. When the company turned the offer down the parish council registered it as a Community Asset.

#### **Consultation**

The parish council made a decision to purchase the facility and to investigate its potential uses. To do this effectively they had to consult their electorate and get them 'on board'. As part of the consultation they held meetings with residents both in the afternoons and evenings.

Once the costs of the project had been estimated, residents were provided with them. As most of the funding would have to come from the Public Works Loans Board, residents were consulted over their views with regard to a 50p per week per property increase in the precept in order to make the repayments on the loan. All those who responded agreed to the increase.

#### **The Project – Phase 1**

The parish council made a formal bid of £750,000 to Sanofi Aventis for the property and applied to the PWLB for a loan of £850,000, which was approved.

The local management team at Sanofi supported the sale and the deal was signed in July 2015, even though the French parent company wanted a better price.

The parish council's intention was to award a lease to a management company to run the site. They had only budgeted £4,000 for the legal fees involved in the preparation of the lease, but the process was quite protracted, resulting in the final bill coming to £10,000.

The Charity that runs Cheshire East's sports sites was awarded the management lease. A Memorandum of Understanding, which defined mutual expectations, was also agreed.

Alterations made to the property cost £100,000. The target set for membership of the gym in the first year was 400. This was exceeded and now stands at 1,200. The parish council expect to break even in year 4.

### **The Project – Phase 2**

The council secured a loan £130,000 from the PWLB for the development of a social area and a skate park. The latter is constructed of concrete and was installed by Veolia. It opened in May 2017. It is very well used and there has been no anti-social behaviour. It is locked at 10pm.

### **The Way Forward**

A masterplan is now being developed for the outside area, which will include work on the car park, a new entrance and a swimming pool.

### **Lessons Learnt**

There have been glitches from time to time with the project. However, the road has been comparatively smooth, because the council have always communicated with everyone over their proposals. They have explained how and why decisions were made and provided timescales wherever possible. They have involve the community and done their utmost to be transparent.

**KMP 01.12.17**