

**Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
for Perton held at the Perton Civic Centre, on  
Monday 18th April 2011 at 8.00 p.m.**

A.A. Bourke (Chairman)  
Mrs C.Young  
Mrs. R. Heseltine  
Mrs. P.N. Pitt (joined the meeting at 8.08pm)  
Mrs P.Allen  
Miss C.Duffell  
DJ Billson [District & County Councillor]  
A.K. James [District Councillor]  
D.Heseltine  
A.K.Black  
S.Bott

Also in attendance:-  
District Councillor – Roy Moreton  
Parish Clerk - Tony Tappenden  
Members of the public – Three

1. **WELCOME**

The Chairman, Mr A.Bourke welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs, Mrs A.M.James, Mrs.S.Bott, D.Fereday and Wombourne NPU Inspector Pat Shannaghan.

3. **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 26<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2010**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th April 2010 be confirmed as a true record and the Chairman of the Council duly signed them.

4. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

**WELCOME**

Welcome to all members of the public who have come along this evening and fellow members of the Council. Once again it has been a very busy year for Perton Parish Council with progress in many key areas.

**PERTON CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

Unfortunately once again the programme this year has been a disappointment with no nominations received in either the junior or senior categories, this despite promoting the award in village notice boards, the Chronicle, Perton Place and PPC website.

## **INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2010/2011**

Together with Precept income of £200k the Parish Council also generated just over £72k of receipted income primarily via Civic Centre bookings which was very similar to last year despite the ongoing depressed financial climate. Bank interest generated from cash holdings amounted to just £451.68 which is a huge drop from the year before last due to the continued lowest interest rates in history, additionally we received £4958.66 via incoming grants. Our total expenditure for the year ending 31st March, 2011 was a little over £248k which excludes sums 'ring-fenced' for future provisions.

We continue to seek ways to ensure that we give and get value for money, for example our Annual Insurance Policy, which hitherto has been placed with Aon, last year cost £6189.00 whilst this year we were able to place the policy with Came & Co with the policy underwritten by Aviva specifically for Parish Councils at an annual premium of £5261.25. Additionally we have entered into a three year fixed price agreement which reduces the premium by a further 5% to £4998.19 which means our costs in this area are fixed until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013 other than annual index linked rises which sees the cover increase along with premiums at the current rate.

## **PRECEPT**

The precept for 2011/2012 has been set at £200,000 which is maintained at the same level as 2010/11, 2009/10 & 2008/09. So, for the fourth year in a row we have managed our costs and income efficiently and effectively in order to maintain the status quo despite the usual pressures of rising prices and increased maintenance costs at the Civic Centre. Again the Parish Council were very keen not to increase the burden on taxpayers given the ongoing severity of the fiscal climate together with rampant inflation. To put the Parish Precept into context the annual charge equates to £54.64 on a band D property, or £1.05 per week.

## **THE CIVIC CENTRE**

The Civic Centre has once again been a vibrant and busy place over the last year much of which is due to the regular customer base which provides a wide

range of activities from Karate to Zumba and suchlike. Private functions, parties and wedding celebrations are again, as last year, slightly down due to the continuing difficult economic climate which is clearly causing people to consider their finances before making any kind of commitment which may be regarded as non-essential.

Meanwhile the Centre Management Committee has been hard at work with regular management meetings and has taken appropriate action to ensure that the Centre is well maintained, secure, inviting and cost effective. Our costs have risen considerably over recent years but the Council has again made huge efforts to shield Civic Centre customers from the worst of the credit crunch and inflationary pressures. For 2011/12 not only has the Parish Council decided not to increase the precept but a decision was also taken to freeze room hire rates, thus protecting both tax payers and centre users alike. Additionally a number of worthwhile charities and local public groups have received benefit by way of 'Concessionary' room hire rates which are subsidised beyond the 'break even' approach that generally prevails with Civic Centre budgeting.

Last year it was generally recognised that going forward the Civic Centre is, in many areas, starting to suffer in a variety of ways from general breakdowns and maintenance demands to a need for refurbishment and redecoration. Therefore the Council has in this financial year embarked on a programme of refurbishment which initially focuses on the main Lakeside Hall. In the summer of 2010 we completed phase one of a two phase plan to refresh the hall which included:

- New lower level suspended ceiling complete with modification to the ventilation and air extraction system together with new energy efficient dimmable lighting to suit a variety of different functions at a total cost of £17285.00
- Replacement blackout blinds and blackout lined curtains to enable daytime cinema functionality at a total cost of £3419.41
- Replacement Auditorium & Stage Lighting and controls at a total cost including installation and commissioning of £6359.63
- A sum of £3312.00 was received in incoming grants specifically towards these projects. (Details below)

The work to date has delivered significant improvement to the hall which will be fully realised once phase two is completed this coming summer when the following works will commence:

- Full refurbishment and decoration
- Storage access area under stage
- Removal of existing composite floor which is cracking extensively
- Installation of new solid oak board floor

Aside from the Lakeside Hall Perton Village Nursery were able to secure some grant funding which enabled a refit of the Madeline Moore room kitchen and toilets and also a significant reworking of the external area located between the Civic Centre and Perton Church which is used almost exclusively by Perton Village Nursery as a children's play area.

### **PLAYGROUND & MULTI-USE GAMES AREA**

Our playground and Multi-Use Games Area have been very well utilised over the last twelve months and it is gratifying to see both of these facilities so well populated particularly now that the days are getting longer and a little warmer. The Muga will be again hopefully be used this summer in part fulfilment of our children's 'Summer Sussed' programme, which is particularly convenient, as long as the weather is fine, since our Lakeside Hall is likely to be closed for refurbishment. As both play areas are relatively new they have not required a great deal of support expenditure this year although we did have to take the basket swing out of action rather rapidly following a rigorous safety check which found that the wire supporting 'ropes' were frayed to virtual breaking point. Accordingly the unit was out of use for a couple of weeks but the manufacturer had clearly seen this issue before as the replacement supporting 'ropes' are now very sturdy chain links which will not fray. The ongoing issues in both these areas is the constant littering despite a very large number of litter bins being in-place, this is down to either laziness and / or a lack of pride in the local area.

### **LITTER**

A continual source of complaints from residents relates to littering, broken glass and dog fouling. Our own Litter Warden patrol continues to operate in two shifts

and thus provides cover seven days a week to ensure that litter is cleared from Public areas when the public are about in numbers. Thanks also must go to volunteer groups from Lakeside Community Church and other local Perton groups and individual residents that perform regular litter collection to uphold their pride in the village of Perton. Nonetheless litter issues seem to be increasing and it is important that this matter is given high profile in the education of youngsters both in the home and at school since many young people are amongst the worst offenders.

### **POLICING**

As in previous years the Parish Council continues to receive more complaints regarding nuisance, littering and anti-social behaviour than any other type of issue. Added to the usual mix has been one or two specifically focussed bouts of anti-social behaviour which have been challenging to all concerned but eventually reached satisfactory conclusions following involvement from the Parish Council. However despite further reorganisation within the police ranks the neighbourhood police team continue to be located within the Civic Centre building and this ensures more policing time on Perton and a greater visibility of uniformed officers albeit PCSOs in the main. As a result many parishioner complaints are now focussed directly towards the police team.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH PARISHIONERS**

Newsworthy items are passed on to the local press where possible and we often take a page within 'Perton Place' to communicate events and information. The Parish website remains a principal source of information for parishioners and provides a broad array of information which we strive to keep up to date and interesting. A useful feature of our website is a capability to broadcast an electronic newsletter to parishioners that 'subscribe' to this free service. Still only a small number are on the subscription list so an opportunity for wider coverage is being missed, therefore we would encourage more people to log-on and subscribe. Our web site also includes a 'Guest Book' facility which, whilst not a formal method of contacting the Parish Council, does seem to be a reasonably popular medium for many to post their views on local life and if we

spot a trend of comments we can post a general reply if we believe it to be relevant.

### **NOTICE BOARDS & SIGNAGE**

Two new notice boards have recently been supplied and installed at both Kingswood and Trescott replacing the previous units which had become derelict and unusable. These complement the existing Parish Notice Boards located within the Civic Centre, Anders Square and around The Parkway. All notice boards are visited on a very regular basis to ensure that parishioners are kept well informed regarding events and current affairs relating to Council matters and also activities at the Civic Centre. We would ask qualifying groups that require displaying information in these boards to ensure that their poster is no larger than A4 portrait format as space is limited. Also due to space limitations The Parkway, Trescott and Kingswood boards are reserved for Parish Council matters whilst the Civic Centre and Anders Square boards are more comprehensive in respect to items displayed.

### **BUS SHELTERS & SUBWAYS**

Continued maintenance and cleaning of the subways and bus shelters has had a positive effect in terms of reducing the number of complaints and overall this work makes Perton a cleaner and better place to live. Nonetheless the shelters and subways continue to be subject to random attacks of vandalism and graffiti, probably because these facilities tend to be places where youths meet and congregate. During the fiscal year we spent a total of £1079.40 on maintenance of the bus shelters and a further £3132.00 on graffiti cleaning primarily at the various subways, this sum also included the cost of re-painting the Browning Grove subway. In the next few weeks there will again be some remedial works to local bus shelters, this is a cost that is almost totally associated with vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

### **INTER-PARISH GAMES**

After a considerable battle with local Parishes our efforts in the Inter Parish Games saw us maintain our pinnacle position this year as we again finished the

competition in first place, this for the second year in succession though this year saw a much closer finish with Perton taking the title by just a half point. Our history in the competition has shown continuous improvement following third place in 2008 and sixth place in 2007 and our combined teams have learned what it takes to overcome the competition and excelled to win the event overall two years in a row. A very special 'thank you' again goes to our Perton District Councillor Roy Moreton who has as usual 'gone the extra mile' in co-ordinating this broad range of exciting and challenging events. The 2011 event programme has already commenced with Darts, Sports Quiz and Rifle Shooting and Roy will clearly have his work cut out to ensure we consolidate our position as IPG front runners, since from our lofty position the only other way is down.

### **SENIOR CITIZENS ACTIVITIES**

In support of our Senior Citizens this year saw the introduction of 'Flicks in the Sticks' whereby our Lakeside Hall is transformed into a daytime cinema theatre to enable a touch of 'Movie Magic' to come Perton. Whilst the various films are open to all comers on payment of the ticket price our Senior Citizens choose both the date and the film to be shown and enjoy free admission. The format, which includes an intermission for tea and biscuits has been very well received and typically takes place on selected Monday afternoons which the OAPs prefer rather than venture out at night. The first show featured 'Kinky Boots' a comedy chosen by members of Perton Friendship Club and as an inaugural event was well attended but the immediate issue was light pollution with daylight penetrating the drawn curtains and taking the edge off the presentation. Following the introduction of blackout blinds and curtains the room is now a perfect daytime auditorium for film shows and the second and third shows, 'From Time to Time' and 'Brassed Off', were very well attended and the guest feedback was excellent. Now that we are fully organised for 'Movie Magic' we are expecting a first class turn out for the new Oscar winning best picture 'The Kings Speech' which will come to the Civic Centre on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

## **YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES**

We again supported a number of exciting events over Easter and last summer with a wide range of 'Sussed' activities; these events are very popular with Perton children and they can again look forward to a full programme this coming summer which may follow a slightly different format this year due to financial constraints at the District Council and our own refurbishment programme at Perton Civic Centre, these events will again be subject to booking conditions and a nominal booking fee.

The future of Perton Youth Club is still unresolved but the new administration at Staffs County Council has kept the facility open and available pending budget and organisation changes and we hope in time to see a positive and permanent viable solution put in place.

## **UPPER LAKE**

The 'Geese Peace' initiative continues in conjunction with Staffordshire District Council and various stakeholders. The initiative was originally instigated by the District Council to focus on issues at Perton First School and sought to reduce if not eradicate the problems caused by Canada Geese at the school playing fields. The 'Geese Peace' programme introduced a number of focussed actions designed to deter the birds from coming to the area and the programme has had some positive effect in breaking up the flocks but every action seems to produce nothing more than a temporary improvement. Since there are numerous sites in the wide area with the same issues it seems that only coordinated actions could improve matters and even then only on a temporary basis whilst the programmes are running.

## **FLOODING**

The flooding issues of recent years, which have seen a number of homes on Severn Drive and Itchen Grove flooded out during times of exceptionally heavy rainfall, principally arising from summer storms, have been subject to a great amount of investigative work over the last year and real progress has been made. The current position is that Severn Trent Water has issued a progress update to affected householders stating that they intend to invest over £100,000

to upgrade the sewers in the area which are deemed unable to cope with the amount of rainfall they receive. At present the construction work is planned to start late in 2012 and to complete by early 2013 but Severn Trent state that they are making every effort to bring this date forward and the Parish Council effort is now directed on improving the timescale as opposed to seeking a solution.

### **GRANT AID**

Outgoing grants made by Perton Parish Council over the year totalled £5454.00 compared to £5138.00 in the previous year. This figure comprised the following payments:

£100.00	Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)
£246.00	Perton Carnival Support
£360.00	Perton Village Nursery
£250.00	Perton and Codsall Utd FC
£2000.00	Perton Playing Fields Association
£40.00	Poppy Appeal
£160.00	1 <sup>st</sup> Perton Scouts
£198.00	Leasowe Drive Neighbourhood Watch
£100.00	Codsall Community Arts Festival 2012
£2000.00	Perton Playing Fields Association

Additionally in respect to grant aid, Perton Parish Council are grateful to acknowledge with thanks grants received by the Parish Council which total £4958.66 as follows:

£812.00	Harlequin Pantomime in contribution to stage lighting
£1000.00	Harlequin Pantomime in contribution to hall blackouts
£1500.00	County Councillor D.Billson in contribution to hall blackouts
£125.00	Debbie Patterson Memorial fund contribution to park bench
£1000.00	Nancherrow Tough Guy Competition
£521.66	Staffs County Council Community Paths Initiative for walks map

### **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Perton Parish Council has processed 30 planning applications during the year which sees a continuation of the annual reduction on the figure of 41 for 2009/2010 and 54 during 2008/2009.

### **CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS**

As in 2009/10 Anders Square decorations were re-erected and the Civic Centre was decorated with light festoons on three sides using multi colour change LEDs which are agreed to be very effective. Once again we made arrangements for installation and take-down with a local electrical contractor and the total cost was £1700.00.

### **HARLEQUIN PANTOMIME PRODUCTIONS 2011 & 2012**

Following four previous successful seasons at Perton Civic Centre Harlequin Pantomime Productions returned to Perton in January 2011 to present their new production of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' to the people of Perton and surrounding areas, this was again a wonderful success being very well received by the sell out crowds. Harlequin have now made Perton Civic Centre their home base and not only are the productions hugely anticipated and enjoyed by so many local residents but Harlequin themselves are helping to improve the production facilities in the main Civic Centre hall. We are delighted to confirm that Harlequin return once again in January 2012 with a production of 'Dick Whittington'.

### **NEW YEARS EVE**

As reported last year the New Years Eve Family Disco 2009 was very poorly attended with only ninety two tickets sold. We were aware that many functions of this type were cancelled due to pressures on family budgets resulting from the recession which is understandable. However the Civic Centre is opened specifically for these events with Caretaker staff interrupting their holiday break to ensure the event can take place. Additionally these events are quite costly to stage and any profits made have always been used as contribution to making Perton a better place to live but as the last event was an overall money loser

we ensured that our planned 2010 event gave us a 'get out' capability to enable the event to be cancelled without loss. Unfortunately advance ticket sales were very poor and consequentially the event was cancelled but no loss was incurred. Future events will clearly need to be considered in the light of the experience of the last two.

### **QUEENS DIAMOND JUBILEE**

2012, the year of the London Olympics, will mark sixty years as our reigning monarch for Queen Elizabeth II if she is still on the throne at that time. The Council feels that this is a very significant occasion to be celebrated at a local and national level. With this in mind we have ring-fenced a sum of £2000.00 per year over the last five years, so as we close 2010/11 our fund now contains £10,000 and we shall contribute the same in the new year and possibly next as well to provide a total budget of £12k-14k to mark the occasion. We have utilised our website, Perton Place Ad-Mag, local newspapers and our Notice Boards to invite parishioners to make suggestions as to how this event should be celebrated. Your opinion is welcome as soon as possible since the new Council from May onwards this year will need to make some decisions as to how this occasion is recognised.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I am pleased to say that the last twelve months has again been very busy and very productive and, as this report demonstrates, we have made some very real progress for Perton making this an even better place to live.

With new opportunities to enjoy at the Civic Centre through both refurbishment and an expanding agenda of events plus very well attended central play areas we are seeing the results of positive decisions made by this Council.

Accordingly I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their support and involvement during the last year.

The help from my Parish Clerk Tony Tappenden has been gratefully received and his office has had a great deal of involvement in all of our projects and Tony assures me that his efforts rely very heavily on the support that he receives from both the Assistant Clerk Alison Moreton and also Becky Hodgetts

so I thank them all for their efforts and dedication. Also the Council and Centre staff who have all worked very hard to ensure good results, and seek on every occasion to be supportive and welcoming to customers old and new and recognise that they have just one chance to create a good 'first impression' showing attention to detail and a very helpful and co-operative attitude, I thank them all.....Thank You.

5. **POLICE MATTERS**

Wombourne NPU Inspector Pat Shannaghan had been invited to attend the meeting but sent apologies stating that he was unavailable but Ian Gould would attend in his place. Despite an e-mail reminder to Ian Gould from the Clerk last week there was no police in attendance and the Cllrs expressed concern and disappointment at this latest 'no show'.

6. **PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

Mrs L.Harris said that further to the recent presentation to PPC by the SSDC Enforcement Officer John Littleton, she was disappointed that there has been no improvement to the dog fouling issue and she is not impressed and never received a leaflet even though these were supposedly going to be distributed.

Cllr A.K.James said he was equally disappointed as he had written to the Enforcement Officer but received no response.

The Clerk advised that leaflets were received from John Littleton by the NPU for onward distribution by the PCSOs.

Cllr Mrs P.Allen said that the properties to be leafleted were on the Cosford Court side and maybe should have included all properties by the lakeside.

Cllr Mrs R.Heseltine said that in order to pursue these issues the Enforcement Officer would need to know the time of day of these occurrences.

Cllr Mrs C.Young said that Perton Playing Fields were used and abused in exactly the same way and dogs are consistently off leads in the area and it is impossible for a dog to be under control when not on a lead despite pleas to the contrary by many dog owners.

Cllr A.K.Black said that he fully agreed with this point having seen the evidence with his own eyes.

There was further discussion on matters associated with dogs and poor owner responsibility.

Cllr Mrs R.Heseltine provided a brief overview on the current status of the 'Geese Peace' initiative and said that herself and three other PPC Councillors had attended the most recent meeting and provided the details of the meeting content. She said that it is important that there is a process of education in place and also other local sites are involved so the problem covers a wide area.

Mrs C.Davies addressed the meeting saying that she had been a tenant of Bromford Housing for twenty seven years and felt that the management of the Perton Bromford estate is now very poor and a disgrace to South Staffordshire and she yearned for a return of the old values which were typical of her early years as a Bromford tenant. She mentioned that the Census lady had been in the area three times trying to finalise matters and that she was surrounded by incompetent people who couldn't care less about any of the big issues facing society. She also said that there is now a lack of communication between Bromford Housing and their tenants and that it is now common for police to be in attendance due to the increasing number of anti-social issues. She outlined a number of additional concerns from out of control dogs which she said should be on leads through to problems associated with her bus pass since the takeover of this matter by the County Council.

Cllr Mrs P.Allen said that in many instances Civic pride is sadly lacking adding that in respect to recent house to house canvassing it is very noticeable that there are now many empty properties despite the supposed lack of housing and many others that are in a serious state of neglect. She said that it is apparent that there has been a change in housing policy with many single people and people with various difficulties that are now tenants and yet the housing organisations have a duty of care to all their tenants.

Cllr Mrs C.Young said that PPC should meet with Bromford to try to influence the various policies and added that where a house has been modified for special needs it should be used. More discussion followed along similar lines, Cllr Mrs P.Pitt said that there appears to be rules in place but they are never enforced, there are complaints but they are never listened to and there is little or no vetting of new tenants.

**RESOLVED** that the Clerk will identify the appropriate Bromford Housing Manager and write a letter advising of the above concerns and seek to arrange a face to face meeting between PPC and Bromford Housing.

Mr F.O'Leary raised a couple of issues stating that he had recently sold a raffle ticket to a lady in Browning Grove and she had made comment about some of the awful people in the area. He also asked about the ordinary bus stops saying that many of the

timetables were broken or missing but accepted that PPC were responsible only for the shelters. He also mentioned that one side of the notice board in Anders Square is smashed and the Clerk said that a repair is in-hand.

Mrs L.Harris said that she has experienced similar problems with Bromford over a thirty year period and added that many of the houses had recently had new aerials erected and the wiring of the down leads is a real mess and in some cases it is just strung horizontally between buildings.

Cllr S.Bott said that in respect to aerials the changeover to digital TV is driving new requirements for technology but this should not be an excuse for poor workmanship.

Cllr D.Heseltine said that for many Housing Associations much maintenance work was contracted to Connaught who has gone bankrupt – he said that this was no defence of the matter but just part of the problem.

7. **VOTE OF THANKS**

On behalf of all the members Cllr Mrs P.Pitt thanked the Chairman for all his hard work and dedication as ‘stand-in’ over the previous twelve months which had been busy and productive and also extended thanks to the Clerk and all Civic Centre staff for their support and focus throughout the year together with a special thank you to the three members of public who had been visible at meetings so often during the last year.

8. The Chairman thanked those attending and invited all present to join him for light refreshments.

The Meeting closed at 8.55 p.m.

Chairman

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2012