

Present: Mrs R.Heseltine [Chairman]
Mrs C. Young [Vice Chairman]
Mrs P Allen
D.J.Billson
AA Bourke
AK Black
D.Fereday

Also Present: County Councillor – R.J.Marshall
Dave Heywood – South Staffordshire Council
Tony Ward – South Staffordshire Council
Parish Clerk – Tony Tappenden

188/08 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were offered and accepted from Cllrs Mrs PN Pitt, Miss C Duffell, A.K.James NP Caine, D.Heseltine and District Councillor R.Moreton.

189/08 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No declarations were offered.

190/08 **PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

Cllr Mrs Heseltine welcomed Dave Heywood & Tony Ward from SSDC and stated that the intent was for them to answer questions from PPC Councillors in respect to matters relating to 'Partnership Working' in order to bring about the provision of a Leisure Centre with pool on Perton.

Cllr Mrs P.Allen asked when the original discussions had started with respect to a Perton fitness suite and what was currently happening.

Cllr D.Billson stated that he had started the original discussions with Tony Ward some 2.5 years ago.

D.Heywood said that the proposal had been put to the District Council via the Service Challenge process but it did not progress. However, he further stated that any proposal for a Leisure Centre / Swimming Pool would be a complete non-starter with South Staffs Council due to the costs. He said that a starting point would be in the region of £3 to 3.5 million and then interest charges and annual operating costs would make such a project totally unviable. Additionally he said that Council officers would not be permitted to waste time looking at a project of this type when a perfectly good Leisure Centre with pool exists just three miles away.

Cllr A.Bourke queried how Perton people could get to the pool without their own transport stating that public transport between the two villages is very poor and that generally the people of Perton feel neglected by both the District Council and County Council in respect to facilities.

D.Heywood responded saying that statistics showed that car usage on Perton was high and that in general terms South Staffordshire is rated 'high' on national lists for access to sports facilities. He restated that both a pool and a sports hall would be non starters due to the start up and running costs. He said that Perton was a constant beneficiary of SSDC initiatives and lots of officer time had gone into the recent lottery award and the resulting Muga and other ongoing initiatives exist such as the Hype and Sussed sessions.

Cllr Mrs P.Allen queried the basis of the statistical evidence that had been used for the project to provide a Fitness Suite asking how the demographics had been defined. She

said that Codsall High was dependent on Perton children.

D.Heywood continued stating that new initiatives will continue to be made available and offered the proposed Integrated Youth programme as an example of one such new initiative. He said that the Fitness Suite was an initiative driven by Cllr D.Billson who was trying to find a pragmatic solution to the needs. He confirmed that South Staffordshire will see no new initiatives for Leisure Centres and pools other than projects that are based around the four existing sites which serve the entire area and which will be subject to constant investment to meet increasing customer expectations. The District Council would like to do more but the five year capital programme will not enable it since all existing plans would fully utilise the existing reserves.

Cllr A.Bourke asked if this meant that any new money from any new source will also go elsewhere and D.Heywood confirmed that this would be the case for the foreseeable future.

Cllr Mrs.R.Heseltine said that the time had now arrived when the Council should forget about history and recognise that the pragmatic view is to accept that a pool on Perton is not viable and to channel efforts into determining what can actually be achieved.

Cllr R.Marshall said that in this instance he 'wore two hats' one for Perton and another for the District Council. Whilst he fully understood the needs and desires of Perton he said that SSDC must take a holistic view and that the proposal by Cllr D.Billson had followed the Musco model (Must, Could, Should) but failed due to a lack of capital.

Cllr A.Bourke said that he now better understood the overall policy since matters had never previously been explained in such depth. He further stated that Perton has to provide and pay for all of its facilities and suggested that it would be a good idea for SSDC to change policy and take responsibility for some of the bigger projects around the Parishes.

T.Ward explained that this was the way things used to get done but overall the policy was not too successful which is why the responsibility was farmed out to the Parish Councils.

D. Heywood said that the District was stronger in the support role and that secondary support is best via the CLPs for facilities such as Play Rangers and holiday programmes. Cllr D.Billson advised that since there are 27 Parishes SSDC cannot and will not take on these additional roles since, amongst other things, there would be problems arising from the Capital Grants and Loan scheme and he has informed PPC many times regarding the overall policy in respect to the bigger issues.

Cllr Mrs P.Allen acknowledged that the message they had received on this occasion from the SSDC visitors was consistent with that given by Cllr D.Billson and other District Councillors which had been stated emphatically on previous occasions. She went on to query the future use of Perton Middle School insofar as there is a reduction in pupil numbers which implies an increase in spare capacity which may be put to other uses. Cllr D.Billson responded saying that the CLP representative Mr Paul Woodcock is scheduled to present to PPC at the April meeting and that he has said that money can be made available.

D.Heywood said that he would need to view the use of schools in terms of impact to existing facilities saying that 26% of Codsall Centre usage was derived from Perton which would mean a potential of £70k loss in revenue if new members could not be recouped from elsewhere. Additionally he said that staffing costs would go through the roof of the revenue budget.

Cllr A.Bourke asked if it would be possible for some form of regular transport to be provided between Perton and Codsall Leisure Centre given the poor current scheduled service.

D.Heywood said that a transport review was currently under consideration and Cllr D.Billson added that he and Steve Winterflood are currently discussing these issues with Staffs CC.

Cllr Mrs P.Allen asked what would be the best method to promote and push our case.

D.Heywood said that the Perton demographics do show suitability for a fitness suite but any project of this type will always go through the same existing process (Must, Should, Could) and where schools are involved Staffs CC will drive the usage.

Cllr D.Billson said that Perton Middle School would be unlikely to support the provision of a Fitness Suite since its own children would probably be excluded due to age restrictions.

Cllr A.Bourke to the opportunity to query the booking methodology for certain play sessions saying that many were 'block booked' by parents and these type of bookings were prone to high levels of 'no shows' which resulted in some children missing out. D.Heywood said that facilities were always under review and were subject to continuous improvement. By way of a closing summary he said that he understood the desire for additional facilities but the South Staffs Council policy is one of sustainability where support priority will always be given to the four existing centres as opposed to any new build scheme.

Cllr Mrs R.Heseltine closed the meeting by thanking both Dave Heywood and Tony Ward for taking the time and trouble to attend the meeting and for providing the necessary clarity to the situation. Additionally she took the opportunity on behalf of PPC to congratulate Tony Ward on his recent appointment as referee at the Paralympics in Beijing later this year.

191/08 **DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED that no fixed date will be arranged for the next Leisure Committee meeting and that any future meeting will be derived from PPC requirements arising from the normal monthly meetings.

The meeting closed @ 7.45 pm

Chairman
14th April 2008