

**Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
for Perton held at the Perton Civic Centre, on
Wednesday 16th April 2008 at 8.00 p.m.**

Mrs C.Young (Chairman)
Mrs. P.N. Pitt
Miss C.Duffell
A.A. Bourke
A.K.Black
Also in attendance:-
District Councillor – Roy Moreton
Parish Clerk - Tony Tappenden
Chief Inspector - Pat Shannaghan
Reporter Wolverhampton Chronicle - Mathew Viney
Members of the public - 11

1. **WELCOME**

The Chairman, Mrs C.Young welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mrs. R. Heseltine, Mrs. A. James, D.Heseltine, D.J. Billson N.P.Caine, D.Fereday, A.K. James

3. **PERTON CIVIC AWARDS PRESENTATION**

(a) Young Citizen of the Year

The Chairman presented the Young Citizen of the Year award to Yvonne Dainty of Milton Court. Congratulations were offered to Yvonne and she was presented with a certificate of award, a Parish 'Coat-of-Arms' plaque and £25.00 cash. The award followed nomination by local police following Yvonne's intervention, without regard to her own safety, when a female police officer was attacked by a drunken male.

(b) Citizen of the Year

The Chairman presented the Citizen of the Year award to Phil Pritchard of Melrose Drive. Congratulations were offered to Phil and he was presented with a certificate of award, a Parish 'Coat-of-Arms' plaque and £50.00 cash. The award followed nomination by local parishioners following Phil's dedicated fund raising efforts in respect to Perton children's playground. Phil discovered the Goodyear Playground appeal, submitted Perton playground into the scheme and was the driving force behind the nationwide competition which was very strong throughout the competition and which was eventually won by Perton and secured the £10,000.00 prize. This money represents some 12.5% of the total playground refurbishment project costs.

4. **MINUTES**

There were no matters arising from the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2007.

5. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

WELCOME

Welcome to all members of the public who have come along this evening and fellow members of the Council. It has been a very busy year for Perton Parish Council with a number of very positive outcomes.

PERTON CITIZENS OF THE YEAR

We know that many people on Perton are very devoted in ensuring that Perton is a great place to live and as we heard earlier we are very pleased to award 'Citizen of the Year' to Phil Pritchard following his tireless efforts to ensure that Perton won the Goodyear Playground Appeal and Phil continues his good works behind the scenes to ensure that the new play facilities get adopted by the village in a highly visible and successful way.

Young Citizen of the year goes to Yvonne Dainty who, without a thought for her personal safety, gave assistance to a female police officer under attack by a drunken male.

Congratulations and thanks to both of them.

PRECEPT

The precept for 2008/2009 has been set at £200,000 which is an increase of £10k over 2007/08 but this additional sum is money set aside for partnership projects between our Parish and the District Council. Additionally last years precept included a sum of £20k by way of guarantee towards a possible cash shortfall for the new drainage system at Perton Playing Fields. Since this guarantee was not called upon it was redirected with additional funds set aside in our new budget for the new childrens' play facilities. To put the increase into context the rise equates to an additional annual charge of £2.75 on a band D property, or 5 pence per week increase compared to 2007/2008.

INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2007/2008

Aside from the Precept income of £190k the Parish also generated almost £83k of receipted income primarily via the Civic Centre, £6k in interest income and £16,000 of incoming grants. This last figure includes £10k from the national Goodyear Playground

Appeal which motivated large numbers of Parishioners over several weeks in a very close competition nationwide which we eventually won by a very slender margin. Our total expenditure for the year ending 31st March, 2008 was £212k with cash set aside for projects yet to be paid.

POLICING

The Parish Council receive more complaints regarding nuisance and anti-social behaviour than any other type of issue. Therefore, following extensive campaigning, we now have the neighbourhood police team actually located within the Civic Centre building to ensure more policing time on Perton and a greater visibility of uniformed officers. Additionally we secured the provision of two Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who are a very useful addition to the team.

Many of the anti-social problems experienced on Perton are drink related and with this in mind the Council has worked in close partnership with South Staffordshire Council to instigate an alcohol control order throughout the village public spaces. Our efforts have been rewarded since the required consultations have been completed and the appropriate approvals granted. Accordingly Perton will very shortly become subject to a 'Designated Public Places Order' in respect to alcohol consumption and area signage will start to appear very shortly to confirm the commencement of the order.

LITTER

Litter issues have been prominent again this year and a continual source of complaints from residents. To respond to the issues we requested South Staffordshire Council to provide additional bins in Anders Square and we also made some amendments to the hours worked by the Parish Councils own Litter Warden to improve visibility of the service and ensure that the litter is cleared from Public areas when the public are about in numbers. Thanks also must go to volunteer groups from Perton Christian Fellowship and other local Perton residents that perform regular litter collection; it is always good to see so many people taking pride in the village of Perton.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARISHIONERS

The Parish website has received several accolades in respect to its ease of navigation and broad array of information and we strive to keep this up to date and interesting.

Judging by the number of postings on the web 'Guest Book' this seems to be a popular medium for many.

Additionally we ensure that newsworthy items reach the local press where possible and we also now often take a page within 'Perton Place' which is distributed to Perton Village homes every month. This is a useful medium for broadcasts concerning the Centre and forthcoming events since many families retain this booklet during the month as it is a good reference document for local companies and service providers.

NOTICE BOARDS

The website and door delivery services referred to above are also supplemented by regular updates to the Parish Notice Boards located within the Civic Centre, Anders Square and around The Parkway. These are visited on a very regular basis to ensure that parishioners are kept well informed regarding events and current affairs relating to Council matters.

BUS SHELTERS

Following two extensive programmes for Bus Shelter refurbishments over the last two years sadly we have suffered yet more vandalism to the shelters at Leasowe Drive, Shackleton Drive and Offas Drive, all of which have received replacement windows within the last two weeks. This vandalism together with similar attacks on Perton Civic Centre and repeated graffiti at the Subways is very expensive to correct and has a direct impact to the Council Tax demands on Perton residents which could otherwise be reduced or contribute to Parish enhancements.

SUBWAYS

An area of significant concern for residents of Perton Village are the three subways which have become meeting places for youths who are sometimes rowdy and spoil the area with litter and graffiti. These three subways are now subjected to monthly contract cleaning following the previous application of anti-graffiti paint and this has helped greatly to improve the look and cleanliness of these areas, but as stated above this is a cost that is directly associated with vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

LEISURE CENTRE / SWIMMING POOL

The Parish Plan report analysis indicated the desire to provide a Leisure Centre with

Pool at Perton. During the course of the year the Parish Council has evaluated this possibility with the help of private enterprise and also in terms of Partnership Working with South Staffordshire Council. Unfortunately we have concluded that for the Parish to do this in isolation is not viable financially and the policy of the District Council is to continue to serve South Staffordshire via the four existing centres. It is unlikely that this position will alter significantly in the foreseeable future.

INTER-PARISH GAMES

Despite an overall fourth position in the 2006 competition Perton fortunes declined in 2007 with a final position of sixth. The 2008 programme is already in 'full-swing' so let's hope we can improve our placing on this years event. Once again our Perton District Councillor Roy Moreton, has pulled out all the stops coordinating this broad range of exciting and challenging events, a special 'thank-you' to Roy. So far we already have one trophy with a 'first place' in the rifle shooting.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

We supported a number of exiting events over Easter and the summer with a full programme of 'Sussed Out and About'. These events are not only important for Perton children but also cover other areas such as Pattingham and Codsall. Since these activities are so popular we have committed again to fully support the 2008 Easter and Summer programmes. Additionally the Parish Council is currently actively engaged in action to save the Perton Village Youth Club from closure. So far we have won a twelve months delay to planned closure and are currently considering a variety of options in order to solve this issue.

PERTON PLAYING FIELDS

Via Perton Playing Fields Association, 2007 saw a huge undertaking completed with a major revamp of the drainage system at the Perton Playing Fields. Councillor Keith James provided a great deal of personal time and effort to ensure that funding was found and the project was implemented in a timely and efficient manner. On behalf of Perton residents we extend a special thank you to Keith for his monumental personal effort, and we are delighted to say that a commemorative Castenea tree (Sweet Chestnut) has been planted in the area in recognition of his undertaking.

UPPER LAKE

Work has now been completed at the lakeside project with the SSDC specialist contractors working in freezing conditions just before and just after Christmas. The prime consideration was the stabilisation of key sections of embankment and lake edges. A natural approach using pre-planted coir rolls will reform the lake edges at the same time as increasing their natural biodiversity. Additionally the planting of wild flower seeds will greatly enhance this area when they come into season. Another phase of work will commence shortly that will address the current wet and muddy conditions and give a safer, cleaner route through the open space.

GRANT AID (SECTION 137 TRANSACTIONS)

Grants totalling £5460.00 have been made to various applicants, of which £4000.00 went to the Playing Fields Association.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

We have processed 75 planning applications during the year which represents a slight decrease on the figure of 83, for 2006/2007.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

Anders Square decorations were partially re-erected as in previous years although the display was curtailed to some degree since Sainsburys had to remove some hazardous trees that contained effective light displays, Sainsburys did however fully compensate the Parish Council for this. The lights were well received by most residents and by way of addressing the balance of display the Civic Centre was decorated with new light festoons on three sides and this was achieved using multi colour change LEDs which were agreed to be very effective. We also made arrangements for installation and take-down with a more local electrical contractor and saved a considerable sum by doing so.

THE CIVIC CENTRE

The Centre Management Committee have been hard at work with regular management meetings and taken appropriate action to ensure that the Centre is well maintained, secure, inviting and cost effective.

CIVIC CENTRE ROOM HIRE RATES & CONCESSIONS

In addition to direct grants a number of worthwhile charities and public groups have received benefit by way of 'Concessionary' room hire rates at the Civic Centre. Following tariff revisions in April 2006 the rates were frozen in 2007 and we have recently announced that rates will again remain un-altered until the next review in April 2009.

HARLEQUIN PANTOMIME PRODUCTIONS 2008 & 2009

Following the pantomime season in January 2007 when Harlequin Pantomime Productions presented their new production of 'Treasure Island' to the people of Perton the Council had no hesitation in agreeing to a Harlequin return in January 2008 with a production of 'Puss in Boots'. This event was very widely acclaimed and played to full houses over the entire week. For those that don't know Harlequin is a dedicated troupe of amateur players that adopt professional attitudes in every aspect of their productions. The Council are delighted that they are making Perton Civic Centre the home base for their productions and can announce that next January 2009 will see a full week of Aladdin. Huge numbers of advance ticket sales have already been achieved so if you are interested book your tickets now. The Parish Council is also delighted to announce that not only have Harlequin delivered great pantomimes to the people of Perton they do so in a non-profit based way. We have recently been advised that a significant proportion of this years Harlequin proceeds is being donated to the Perton childrens Playground Project.

MUSIC EVENTS

Following three consecutive years staging a Music Festival over a brief but concentrated events programme, last year saw a different approach with Councillor D.Billson leading the Management committee in respect to the search to find 'crowd puller' events on Saturday nights.

The ever popular Talon – 'Best of the Eagles' again played the Civic Hall on Saturday 6th October 2007 as part of their 10th Anniversary Tour and again this proved to be a very popular event.

Changing the beat, Saturday 1st December 2007 saw Johnny 2 Bad, a very popular UB40 tribute band, deliver a very well received session to an audience that was smaller than anticipated but hugely appreciative.

Live music is very popular with some sections of the public but it is difficult to break-even since the cost of the bands dictate that large numbers of tickets must be sold. Nonetheless we thank Dave for all his hard work which is very much appreciated. For the coming year we will seek to test yet another formula with discos aimed at family gatherings, certainly if the New Years Eve party is the benchmark then there is plenty of demand on Perton.

NEW YEARS EVE

On New Years Eve 2007 the Parish Council sponsored a family disco for the second successive year hoping to repeat the success of the previous year which indeed it did. As in 2006 tickets were sold in advance and the event 'sold out' well before Christmas. The event featured the Raymond John Disco Roadshow and the feedback we received was excellent. After the deduction of costs the Council retained a profit fractionally over £700.00 which, as stated during the event promotion, will go towards the new central childrens play facilities. The Council are likely to commit to run a similar event next New Years Eve.

QUEENS DIAMOND JUBILEE

If she is still on the throne at the time, 2012, also the year of the London Olympics, will mark sixty years as our reigning monarch for Queen Elizabeth II. 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 further sum of £2000.00 in 2007 year and we will make similar budget contributions yearly until 2012 when the money will be utilised in some special way to celebrate this very special occasion.

PLAYGROUND & MULTI-USE GAMES ARENA.

Leaving the best to last I am delighted to say that this coming summer will see the provision of some excellent new play facilities for Perton children. Most parishioners will be aware that the existing playground at central Perton is in need of refurbishment and the ball court next door is currently in very poor condition. Around May / June of this year our contractors will commence work on the replacement of both of these facilities.

For some time this Council has been working to generate the money for this project and this has been complicated by the fact that many strands of finance have been

bought together to achieve the total required. We have received commitments for specific sums from the Lottery as part of the South Staffordshire Play Strategy and grants from the District Council, County Council and Youth Opportunities fund. Additionally we have had financial contributions from Bromford Housing and commitments from both South Staffordshire Housing Association and Harlequin Pantomime Productions following their excellent panto season on Perton earlier this year. The final financial elements are derived from the excellent efforts of Perton residents in the Goodyear Annual Playground Appeal which produced a last gasp win of £10k following heavy competition from other areas with the significant final balance being provided from Perton Parish Council funds so a big thank you to all concerned that made this happen.

The play facilities themselves will comprise a complete refit of the playground with a brand new layout catering for a broad range of ages from small tots to teenagers. We expect this to be very well received since the final layout was subject to local consultation and voting which generated nearly 1200 votes, so Perton gets the playground it wants. Next to the playground in a similar position to the existing ball court, albeit rotated through 90 degrees, we will build a Multi Use Games Arena which will be a fenced in area with hard surface marked out for various sports such as football, cricket and other ball games. Aside from giving the kids a great play facility this should also provide a major reduction in 'nuisance' games that occur in unsuitable areas. We hope and expect that Perton children will love these facilities and ensure they are well cared for and free of litter and vandalism.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I am pleased to say that the last twelve months have 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. Accordingly I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their support during 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 most of our projects and Tony assures me that his support relies 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, showing attention to detail and a very helpful and co-

operative attitude, I thank them all.

Thank You.

6. **POLICE MATTERS**

Inspector Shanaghan provided various useful items of information, some of which were in response to questions raised by Councillors and members of public;

He stated, in response to a question concerning anti-social behaviour, that within S.Staffordshire crime was down by 23% but anti-social behaviour is a big issue across the territory and this tends to increase the fear and perception of crime in the area. He said that Perton currently has two PCs and two PCSOs but a new focus within the team would help improve matters. New Chief Constable Simms has, over the last six months, examined ways to reduce bureaucracy and as a result the Neighbourhood Teams and Response Officers were being merged into a single unit which results in five named officers being available to Perton. Added to this is a greater focus on 'listening' to the wants and needs of the public and victims of crime to better understand what outcomes are required by the public. One benefit immediately arising from this is the introduction of 'within the hour' response to calls concerning anti-social behaviour. On top of this they are working with other organisations to ensure other aspects are improved, for instance young peoples facilities have been issues in the past but improvements are being made. They now have better partnership working via joint consultation groups and locality working. Finally he said that Perton was also the pilot for Integrated Youth Support Services and hopefully this would make a positive contribution – he closed by re-stating that the priority is now a focus against anti-social behaviour.

Cllr A.A.Bourke said that aside from concerns raised this evening there had been several issues raised in recent weeks regarding anti social behaviour at Spenser Avenue and asked if, given the new target of 'response within the hour', could this area be the subject of special attention until the problems improve.

Cllr Mrs P.Pitt also requested if the entire area could be subjected to blitz policing upon the introduction of the DPPO in order that people quickly got used to the new order.

Inspector Shanaghan said this would be the case together with special attention to off-licence sales in and around Perton.

Cllr A.Bourke mentioned the positive comments made by local youths at the recent 'political speed dating' event and said it was important that everybody works together to keep this facility open.

Inspector Shanaghan said that on the whole most youths were decent but many are like sheep and follow the leaders who are often the real trouble makers. He said it is important that there are as many background activities as possible to prevent problems developing.

7. **QUESTIONS**

In response to the Chairmans Report Cllr A.Bourke again thanked Citizen of the Year Phil Pritchard for his great efforts regarding the childrens playground saying that it would not have happened without him. Addressing Yvonne Dainty he said that the entire Council and hopefully the entire Village were proud of her and it was great to see a young lady from the area receive the award for positive action at a time when generally youths get so much 'bad press'. He further said that it was a shame that so many Councillors were unable to attend the meeting and were, for a change, outnumbered by public. He said that this was due to two meetings within three days and asked the Clerk to add this matter to the agenda for the next meeting. In respect to the Leisure Centre with Pool which was also mentioned in the report he stated that no decision had actually been taken not to pursue this project and he quoted a number of figures relating to potential costs and impact to S.Staffs Council Tax payers. He said that he would continue to pursue this opportunity and also asked the Clerk to add this item to the next agenda for discussion.

Cllr Mrs C.Young said that it had taken a great deal of time to raise the money to build the Civic Centre many years ago and it would take much longer to raise the minimum of £3m that would required in this instance and then there was the annual running costs on top.

A member of public said that there were often issues of anti-social behaviour around Spenser Avenue, particularly on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings and this was covered by Inspector Shanaghan. She further stated that there are many instances of dog fouling around both the Upper Lake and Anders Square and dogs were often off lead and causing a nuisance.

Cllr Mrs C.Young said that this was currently a hot topic and the Council had spent much time examining byelaws regarding dog control stating that in her view a dog was not under control if not on a lead.

Cllr A.Bourke said that all previous discussion about dogs had concerned only the Playing Fields which were subject to special byelaws and agreed that there was a problem in the areas stated as there are many more people in the vicinity. He also said that the areas by the schools should also be considered.

Inspector Shanaghan said that the PCSOs were empowered to issue spot fines to irresponsible dog owners although they would usually caution them first.

Cllr A.Black said that all decent people were against dog fouling and associated problems and asked for this matter to be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Cllr Mrs P.Pitt made the final comment offering further thanks to Yvonne for her brave and selfless actions which won her the award.

8. **VOTE OF THANKS**

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

The Meeting closed at 9.10 p.m.

Chairman

12th May 2008