

**Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
for Perton held at the Perton Civic Centre, on  
Monday 26th April 2010 at 8.00 p.m.**

Mrs C.Young (Chairman)  
A.K.Black (Vice-Chairman)  
Mrs. P.N. Pitt  
Mrs P.Allen  
Mrs A.M.James  
DJ Billson [District & County Councillor]  
A.K. James [District Councillor]  
A.A. Bourke  
N.P.Caine

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

1. **WELCOME**

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

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Mrs. R. Heseltine, D.Heseltine, Miss C.Duffell and D.Fereday and Wombourne NPU Inspector Andy Chapman who was unable to provide a substitute.

3. **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 27<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2009**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 27th April 2009 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**

Unlike recent years this programme was a disappointment with no nominations in either the junior or senior categories, despite promoting the award in village notice boards, the Chronicle, Perton Place and PPC website.

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

Our playground area and Multi-Use Games Area have settled down well since the installations were completed and it is gratifying to see both of these facilities so well used particularly now that the days are getting longer and a little warmer. The Muga will be used this summer in part fulfilment of our children's 'Sussed' programme. As both units are relatively new they have not required a great deal of expenditure this year although we provided some replacement turfing across the playground areas to remedy some bare patches where previous seeding had failed to take and also a replacement spinner was required since the original unit was damaged beyond repair when a child became stuck following misuse and had to be cut free by the Fire Service. 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 or a lack of pride in the local area. Perton Parish Council are currently looking at a project to install floodlights around the Muga in order to extend its hours of use in the winter months but this will only proceed subject to budget availability and general acceptance of local residents.

### **PRECEPT**

The precept for 2010/2011 has again been set at £200,000 which is maintained at the same level as 2009/10 & 2008/09. Despite the usual pressures to consider an increase the Parish Council were very keen not to increase the burden on taxpayers given the ongoing severity of the current recession. To put the Parish Precept into context the annual charge equates to £55.13 on a band D property, or £1.06 per week.

### **INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2009/2010**

Together with the Precept income of £200k the Parish Council also generated just over £75k of receipted income primarily via Civic Centre bookings which represents a better than expected increase from last year despite the ongoing recession. However, bank interest generated from cash holdings amounted to just £340.67 which is a huge drop from the previous year due to the lowest interest rates in history. Additionally we received £18107.00 via incoming grants of which just under £15k relates to the Youth Club project and £3k from the Big Lottery being the final payment of the Muga grant. Our total expenditure for the year ending 31st March, 2010 was a little over £226k.

### **POLICING**

Again the Parish Council continues to receive more complaints regarding nuisance, littering and anti-social behaviour than any other type of issue. However 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.

### **LITTER**

A continual source of complaints from residents relates to littering, broken glass and dog fouling. South Staffordshire Council has this year provided additional bins in Anders Square which now include recycling facilities and our own Litter Warden patrol has been split into two shifts to improve focus but still 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.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH PARISHIONERS**

We ensure that newsworthy items reach 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 the service which is free and a recent news update broadcast in this way received some very positive feedback from recipients but since only a small number are on the subscription list an opportunity for wider coverage is being missed so 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**

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 and 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.

### **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 £2352.00 on maintenance of these facilities and 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**

Our efforts in the Inter Parish Games reached a pinnacle this year with first place position after a considerable battle with local Parishes. 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. A very special 'thank you' goes to our Perton District Councillor Roy Moreton who has certainly 'gone the extra mile' in coordinating this broad range of exciting and challenging events. The 2010 event programme has already commenced and Roy will clearly have his work cut out to ensure we consolidate our position as IPG front runners.

### **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 we have extended to provide an activity per day from Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> August to Friday 27<sup>th</sup> August. These events will be subject to booking conditions and a nominal booking fee,

additionally there will be extra events each day for a week commencing 31<sup>st</sup> August which will not be subject to a booking fee.

The pending possible closure of Perton Youth Club is still unresolved but the recent new administration at Staffs County Council has unveiled a newly emerging integrated organisation for the Youth issues and our hope is that when this organisation becomes effective a coordinated approach will see a positive and viable solution put in place.

### **UPPER LAKE**

The 'Geese Peace' initiative was initially 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 at best the programme has had some positive effect in breaking up the flocks but every action seems to produce nothing better than a temporary improvement and a permanent solution seems as far away as ever. 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. Discussions will continue to determine our next actions.

### **FLOODING**

Recent years 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. The current ramifications from this is that, aside from the disruption of the flooding itself, many homes are now uninsurable without huge premiums coupled with unrealistic 'excess payment' conditions. There have been a number of investigations carried out by Severn Trent Water, Staffordshire County Council and South Staffordshire Council and a number of possible causes have been highlighted. However, at this time no single organisation has identified a definite cause and taken responsibility for the problems so an immediate solution is not available but we remain positive that the investigations will uncover the problem and deliver a permanent solution as soon as possible.

### **GRANT AID**

Grants totalling £5138.00 have been made to various applicants, of which £4000.00 went to the Playing Fields Association.

### **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

We have processed 41 planning applications during the year which represents a significant reduction on the figure of 54 for 2008 / 2009 and 75, for 2007/2008.

### **CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS**

As in 2008/9 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 together with the provision of spare replacement LED bulbs the total cost was £2010.00.

### **THE CIVIC CENTRE**

The Civic Centre has been a vibrant and busy place over the last year and whilst the number of private functions may be slightly down due to economic pressures we have been pleased to welcome many new regular hirers to the centre and our weekly diary now includes various additions such as Pilates, Boxercise, Creation Station and Yoga sessions as well as all the established regulars. 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. Costs have risen considerably over recent years but the Council has made huge efforts to shield Civic Centre customers from the worst of the credit crunch and inflationary pressures. However, whilst the Parish Council decided not to increase the precept for 2010/11 a decision was taken to increase room hire rates by a small percentage which means that from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 prices have risen for the first time in four years. Also 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. Additionally April 2010 will see the centre utilised as a movie theatre as we present our first 'Flicks in the Sticks' Movie Magic event which is available to all comers but primarily focussed at OAPs who will enjoy free admission.

Going forward it is generally accepted that 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 are seeking to set aside budget to enable much needed restoration works. Additionally we are hoping in the summer to see a refit of the Madeline Moore room kitchen and toilets as a result of grant money applied for and awarded to Perton Village Nursery. This grant will also be

utilised to improve the external play area located between the Civic Centre and Perton Church which is used almost exclusively by Perton Village Nursery as a children's play area.

### **HARLEQUIN PANTOMIME PRODUCTIONS 2010 & 2011**

Following three previous successful seasons at Perton Civic Centre Harlequin Pantomime Productions returned to Perton in January 2010 to present their new production of 'Mother Goose' to the people of Perton and surrounding areas, this was again a wonderful success being very well received by the sell out crowds. The Parish Council is delighted that Harlequin have now made Perton Civic Centre their home base since 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 2011 with a production of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'.

### **NEW YEARS EVE**

Previous Parish Council sponsored family Disco events for New Years Eve have been very well attended and enjoyed by all, therefore it was a great disappointment to us that New Years Eve 2009 was very poorly attended with only ninety two tickets sold. We are 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 it does put future events in jeopardy. We have again booked an event for New Years Eve 2010 featuring the Millennium 2 Disco Roadshow but will take a decision nearer the time based on demand for tickets as to whether or not the event takes place.

### **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 further sum of £2000.00 in 2009/10 year and we will make similar budget contributions yearly until 2012 when the money will be utilised in some, yet to be decided way, to celebrate this very special occasion. With the

£2000.00 contribution for year 2010/11 already ring-fenced the fund will extend to £10000.00 next year. We have utilised our website, Perton Place Ad-Mag, local newspapers and our Notice Boards to invite parishioners to make suggestions as to what form of celebration should take place.

### **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 and a very well attended central play areas we are seeing the results of positive decisions made by this Council and we hope to repeat a similar success dealing with ongoing issues arising from the possible Youth Club closure and the misery of flooding which affects some residents all too often. 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**

There were no police officers in attendance at the meeting however the Clerk provided brief details, passed on earlier in the day by Insp Andy Chapman, concerning a serious incident which had occurred at around midnight on Friday 23rd April, in the car park by the Pavilion at Gainsborough Drive, which involved a stabbing but not a fatality which had been the subject of rumour around the village since the incident.

There was some discussion on this matter and there was general concern expressed

about the number of incidents at this location and need for some kind of solution to improve matters. Cllr Mrs P.Allen said that whilst this was a serious incident we should acknowledge that such an occurrence is unusual and we are very fortunate compared to many locations in the area where such incidents are common place.

## 6. PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Cllr A.K.James said that the Chairman's report contained much to be pleased about but there were two items that he wanted to highlight that shows Perton is in the news for the right reasons: Firstly he said that it was gratifying to see that Perton had achieved first place in the Inter Parish Games. He thanked District Councillor Roy Moreton, which was echoed by all present, stating that thanks were due not just for the considerable effort put in by Roy but also the result achieved. Secondly he said that the annual pantomime from Harlequin has now enjoyed four successful seasons at the Civic Centre and it is wonderful to see that Harlequin have made their base with us and members of the public far and wide see our Civic Centre at its best during a Harlequin production.

Cllr Mrs A.James asked if the Civic Centre might stage another St Georges Day event given the past popularity of events arranged by Cllr D.Billson for this occasion. Cllr Billson said that we absolutely should consider this in the future particularly as some people think that celebrating England should not be encouraged.

Cllr Mrs C.Young provided a brief overview of the first 'Flicks in the Sticks' performance which had taken place earlier in the day in the Lakeside Hall and had been very well received and she had received a phone call after the event stating how much it had been enjoyed. The Clerk said that there had been a total audience of sixty five and only two of those were paying customers the rest being OAPs which were the target audience. The only significant issue for future consideration if more events are planned is light pollution due to sunlight penetrating the curtains and falling on the screen and washing out the picture definition.

Mr F.O'Leary said that he was aware that the Midland 810 bus route on Perton has been terminated and effectively the vacant timeslots are replaced by the 510. This means that there is now no service running via Richmond Drive. After some discussion the Clerk said he would contact Midland Buses to request confirmation of the facts.

Lynne Harris raised the matter of the Queens Diamond Jubilee event in 2012 and suggested the possibility of naming one of the traffic islands to commemorate the occasion and also suggested a Jubilee clock located in a suitable location where it would not be vandalised. Mr O'Leary said that he had been coming to Council meetings for years and the possibility of naming an island had come up before but it had never happened. It was explained that the Parish Council do not have ownership of these islands which are part of the highways system and are therefore out of our control. Cllr A.K.James said it would be appropriate to have a committee to evaluate and decide upon Jubilee ideas and this committee should include members of the public, it was agreed that this new committee formation be added to the agenda for the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council. Cllr Mrs P.Allen said she favoured a laser light show and picnic and there was some debate about possible music providers and Cllr D.Billson said he would check out availability of certain orchestras and bands.

7. **VOTE OF THANKS**

On behalf of all the members Cllr Mrs P.Allen thanked the Chairman Mrs Christine Young for all her hard work and dedication 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.

Chairman Cllr Mrs C.Young added specific thanks to the Clerk for his effective management of staffing issues brought about by two sessions of absence from one of the Caretakers as a result of two surgical operations.

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

The Meeting closed at 8:48 p.m.

Chairman

18<sup>th</sup> April 2011