

**Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
for Perton held at the Perton Civic Centre, on
Wednesday 4th April 2007 at 8.00 p.m.**

A.K. James (Chairman)
Mrs. R. Heseltine (Vice Chairman)
Mrs P.Allen
Mrs. P.N. Pitt
Mrs. P.C. Bromley
Mrs. A. James
Mrs J.R.Williams
D.J. Billson
A.A. Bourke
N.P.Caine
C.J. Bromley
R.J.Marshall
Also in attendance:-
Parish Clerk – Tony Tappenden
Chief Inspector Pat Shannaghan
Members of the public - 3

1. **WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mrs P.M.French and R.French.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 12 April, 2006 be confirmed as a true record and the Chairman of the Council duly signed them.

4. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

PRECEPT

The precept for 2007/2008 has been set at £190,000 which represents a considerable percentage increase over 2006/07 but includes a sum of £20k that will be directed towards a significant sports project for the parish. To put the increase into context the rise equates to an additional annual charge of £12.36 on a band D property, or 24 pence per week increase compared to 2006/2007.

EXPENDITURE 2006/2007

I would inform you that our expenditure for the year ending 31st March, 2007 was £250,000 of which £130,000 relates to the Parish and £120,000 to the Civic Centre.

POLICING

The Parish Council receive more complaints regarding nuisance and anti-social behaviour than any other type of issue. Therefore we have sought to ensure that the neighbourhood police are actually located within the Civic Centre to ensure more policing time on Perton and a greater visibility of uniformed officers, this is agreed in principle and we await only the specialised 'communications links' before this becomes reality. Additionally we have encouraged and supported the provision of two Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who have recently completed training and we have campaigned for the introduction of a 'Dispersal Order' for youths aged sixteen and below. This power has now been introduced until September via Section 30 police powers against anti-social behaviour.

LITTER

Litter is always a problem and a continual source of complaints from residents, however, a new Warden joined our ranks last year and he has settled in well and has proved himself to be flexible and sympathetic to the needs of residents and the Council alike. Additional to our own Litter Warden we also have a volunteer group 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

Reaching our Parishioners is always a challenge but during the course of the year we have taken several steps to ensure that speedy and efficient lines of communication are opened up between the Council and our parishioners. A particularly impressive medium for both way communications is the launch last year of our revamped website. We commissioned local company 'Kalidescope' to rebuild our site and we are now able to boast of a hugely improved website whilst also improving our ability to keep it up-to-date yet all at

a reduced running cost. Incorporated into the site is a bulletin board which allows site visitors to publicly post their own comments, the ability to e-mail us direct from the site and a facility to sign up for electronic broadcasts on e-mail which may contain news or items of interest to local people. We are hoping to make wide use of this facility once the subscription level reaches a reasonable number.

Additionally we seek to ensure that key newsworthy items reach the local press 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.

PARISH PLAN

As a collector of Council Tax via the Parish Precept the Council were keen to understand the needs, priorities and concerns of parishioners in order to best determine the areas for special focus. With this in mind the Parish Plan questionnaire was devised and distributed to every home within the parish during the second half of 2006 and we received responses from a total of 529 households. The information provided has been analysed and will shortly be available in a comprehensive report that will highlight what is important to Perton residents and what is not. From this we will derive an action plan at Parish level and also use the results to influence thought and action at both the District and County Councils, and appropriate stakeholders.

NOTICE BOARDS

Work has now been completed on the new notice board in Anders Square and this together with the Civic Centre Boards and The Parkway 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.

BUS SHELTERS

Over the last twelve months we have utilised the services of Perton based company MGD (Making Graffiti Disappear) to refurbish our bus shelters. Phase one targeted the three worst shelters at Leasowe , Shackleton and Manston Drive, and following the successful completion we then implemented a phase two project which saw the refurbishment of the shelters at Mercia, Richmond and Sandown Drive. The refurbishment, in all cases, included re-painting with anti-graffiti paint finishes and the replacement of damaged polycarbonate windows.

Additionally to the refurbishment we provided a brand new bus shelter and flooring base at The Parkway between the two entrances to Gainsborough Drive.

SUBWAYS

One of the significant areas of concern for residents of Perton Village, indicated by regular complaints and also feedback from the Parish Plan, are the three subways which have become meeting places for youths who are sometimes rowdy and spoil the area with litter and graffiti. It is unlikely that these will be filled in due to the prohibitive cost and the fact that they are safer road crossings compared to any other form of surface crossing. Therefore, despite several attempts to clean them up the Parish Council has now received agreement from the County Council who will implement a trial of special anti-graffiti paint preparation to provide a better 'face' to the subway which should be much easier to keep clean and decent. The trial will initially be conducted at the Harald Close subway which has now been re-painted as described.

DRIVERS MAPS

Drivers arriving at Perton by either the North or South access to The Parkway and requiring location directions will find two new Village maps which have replaced the old weather beaten displays. The new maps were especially commissioned by the Parish Council and were designed and constructed in the latest formats to ensure simple location of Perton streets and places from those two specific points.

WALKERS MAPS

As a result of producing the Drivers Maps the Parish Council were able to maximise the investment, much of which was associated in producing the mapping information and the copyright charges, by utilising the same base information and overlaying it with additional information mapping the vast array of paths and walkways across Perton Village and the local area. This information allowed us to produce a map for walkers which have been requested numerous times by several groups and individuals. We are very pleased with the results and have decided to set a small charge of 20p to ensure that these maps are requested only by those that see value in them.

LEISURE CENTRE OR SPORTS HALL

The efforts to provide either a Sports Hall or Leisure Centre have not yet been fruitful. However, armed with the strong support for such a facility on Perton, as indicated by the results of the Parish Plan, I am sure that the new Council in May will seek to refocus on this requirement.

PLAY AREA

The Play Area has received its annual inspection and minor works were required to keep it up to the required standard. For example a small amount of repairs were required to the 'wet-pour' safety flooring.

INTER-PARISH GAMES

Despite a first place position in the Chess competition Perton finished fourth overall in the 2006 competition and the 2007 programme is already in 'full-swing'. Following many successes over past years local resident, Roy Moreton, has once again pulled out all the stops coordinating this broad range of exciting and challenging events, a special 'thank-you' for him.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

Summer Chillout was again supported and we believe the programme was well attended in 2006. In addition to this we also supported a number of exciting 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 2007 Easter and Summer

programmes. For the future we are currently focussed on the possible provision of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) for central Perton and via Perton Playing Fields Association we will be undertaking a major revamp of the drainage system at the Perton Playing Fields.

UPPER LAKE

Some interim work has now been completed to improve the lake shore line drainage at significant 'wet-spots'. This is a short term expedient pending a much bigger lakeside project to be carried out by SSDC next year. We have also arranged for the repositioning of a lakeside bench, moving it away from the car park area at the rear of Livingstone Avenue where it was a magnet for anti-social behaviour in and around the residential car park to a location on the opposite side where it retains value for walkers but is not in close proximity to homes.

GRANT AID (SECTION 137 TRANSACTIONS)

Grants totalling £7390.90 have been made to various applicants, of which £4000.00 went to the Playing Fields Association.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

We have processed 83 planning applications during the year which represents a slight decrease on the figure of 84, for 2005/2006.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

Anders Square decorations were re-erected as in previous years, and the lights were well received by most residents. The Church at Perton did not have an external display last Christmas but the Civic Centre was decorated with lights and garlands. The Council is generally disappointed with the local financial support received in respect to Christmas Decorations. Anders Square is the focal point for these decorations yet those benefiting most simply take them for granted. The new Council in May could well have a different approach on this matter.

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.

Accordingly it has:-

1. Replaced the aged external automatic doors with new aluminium doors together with the automated open / close mechanism.
2. Replaced the side and rear wooden fire exit doors with new steel fire exit doors and frames.
3. Replaced the rear lakeside facing panels which were warped and damaged with uPVC coloured fascia boards.
4. Replaced the CCTV internal manual tape driven monitoring system with a new digital storage system that retains recorded information on a 'hard disc drive' for simple access and copying when required.
5. Replaced the ageing and un-appealing internal notice boards with new lockable boards. This enhancement not only improves the cosmetic appearance of the Centre foyer but also allowed the Council to introduce a new 'display' policy regarding the content of the boards which previously were seen as a 'free for all' for business ventures and suchlike.
6. Provided Hot Drinks vending machines in both the main foyer and Boardroom.
7. Renegotiated the commission rate on the Britvic cold drinks dispenser located in the foyer to triple the income to the centre with no increase to the pricing of drinks.
8. Modified the kitchen cooking vent system to ensure ease of access and performed 'deep-cleaning' of the ducts in order to comply with building insurance risk management regulation.
9. Renegotiate the Gas supply contract for the centre and secured a four year fixed price contract with our new supplier. This move saves us in the region 0.007pence per kiloWatt hour which doesn't sound much until you consider that the Centre burns close on a quarter of a million kiloWatt hours of gas each year so our saving is nearly £1700 per year.

CIVIC CENTRE ROOM HIRE RATES & CONCESSIONS

The Council were concerned about the huge increase in running costs of the Civic Centre, a large proportion of which was due to very significant increases in both Gas and Electricity. To counter this it was necessary to review and then increase the room hire rates many of which were set below actual cost due to a previous decision to provide a discounted rate for Perton residents. We now have a more realistic pricing structure in place based on covering costs and a desire for the Centre to generally 'break even' if possible although building maintenance needs often derail this principle. Whilst hire rates have generally increased we have also introduced a 'Concessionary' tariff that can only be applied subject to application to and agreement from the Parish Council. In this way we can ensure that clubs, societies, charities and special needs groups can be catered for at a lower charge to ensure that we continue to be a Community Centre first and foremost.

Additionally, we have recently introduced a new 'Production Company' tariff in order to give the Centre greater appeal to such organisations who may like to bring something different and special to the people of Perton, the recent 'Harlequin' pantomime production being a prime example. This tariff provides for a block booking of the Centre to ensure a good income whilst providing 'cost effective' access to the theatre company that would otherwise be unable to afford our facilities on the normal 'per room per hour' basis. These types of events, however, will need to be limited in number since each production can impact the groups that use the centre regularly every week.

HARLEQUIN PANTOMIME PRODUCTIONS 2007 & 2008

Harlequin Pantomime Productions approached the Council early in 2006 with a request to bring their new production of 'Treasure Island' to the people of Perton in January 2007. The Council had little hesitation in agreeing to stage this production and over five days in January Harlequin staged repeat performances of a production equal in professionalism, quality, energy and visual appeal to anything that would grace the stage of Wolverhamptons' Grand Theatre. Of the hundreds that sat through the performances the unanimous verdict was 'success at every level', a view shared, I am delighted to say, by

Harlequin themselves, in fact so much so that we have already received their confirmation to return in January 2008 with a production of 'Puss in Boots'.

MUSIC FESTIVAL & EVENTS

Leading up to October 2006 Councillor D.Billson led the Management committee in respect to the search to find talented Artistes for our Music Festival resulting in appearances by;

- Talon – The Best of the Eagles
- Bootleg McCartney
- The Rat Pack and All Stars Swing Band
- Queen on Fire

This was the third year for our Music Festival and it has brought many people to the Centre to see the various Artistes. Unfortunately our booking for 'Orchestra of the Swan' had to be cancelled a short time before the event since we were unable to sell even a single ticket – clearly the 'classical' genre is not in demand in this area.

For the coming year the Parish Council will be adopting a different approach to these events having considered that possibly a large number of events over a concentrated period of ten days or so is maybe too much strain on the 'wallet' if not the attention span. Therefore, for the coming Council year we will seek to stage significant 'crowd puller' events on Saturday nights on a regular basis but spread over the year.

So far we have made a couple of bookings which we expect to be very well attended:

Talon – 10th Anniversary Tour appearance on Saturday 6th October 2007

UB40 Tribute – Saturday 1st December 2007

We anticipate that these events and more to come will be a major success and thank Dave for all his hard work which is very much appreciated.

ST GEORGES DAY EVENT

This event billed as 'A Real Black Country Night' took place on Friday 21st April 2006 and featured Giggetty and Dougie Parker and included a Fish & Chips supper and was reasonably well attended by young and old alike.

For St Georges Day 2007 the Council takes a back seat whilst Perton Carnival Committee will be presenting a concert at the Civic Centre, featuring 'Cannock Chase Orpheus Male Choir' with guest soprano soloist Cheryl Hockam, this event will take place on Saturday 21st April.

NEW YEARS EVE

Previous years have seen New Years Eve celebrated at Perton Civic Centre by large numbers of parishioners. On New Years Eve 2006 the Council decided to sponsor its own celebration event in order to gain better control of event management and in support of local charities and good causes. As a result the event, featuring the Raymond John Disco Roadshow, was sold out well in advance and the feedback we received was excellent. After the deduction of costs the Council retained a profit fractionally over £1000.00 which was utilised to support Perton Village Nursery with CD-ROM based learning, assist a Brownie Camp event and the remainder will probably be utilised to replant the traffic roundabout at Stephenson Drive for the pleasure of all residents and visitors.

The Council has already committed 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 sum of £2000.00 in 2006 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.

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 covered some very diverse activities from Music Festivals to Bus Shelters and from Websites to Automatic Doors. Accordingly I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, each and every one of them that has helped me during the

past twelve months. Rita Heseltine my vice chairman has been particularly supportive and I thank her for her valued contribution.

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.

Finally many of you will be aware that Thursday May 3rd is the date for both District and Parish Elections which normally take place every four years.

Therefore, this Council will effectively be dissolved around about that time and the new Council, which will probably comprise some familiar faces and some new ones, will, I'm sure give immediate attention to the business of the day and continue to develop the action plan arising from the Parish Plan.

Once again thank you all for your help and support over the last twelve months.

5. **POLICE MATTERS**

Local Policing Unit commander Inspector Shannaghan informed the meeting that he was still committed to ensure that the Perton PCSOs would be based at Perton Civic Centre although this was not now the case for PCs Duncan Lampitt and Frank Hossack due to security issues associated with CS gas. However he was still unable to give a definite time frame for this arrangement to commence since he was still unaware of the proposed delivery date for the specialist IT encryption equipment that was required at the Centre to enable access into the Police Network.

Cllr A.K.James informed Inspector Shannaghan that overall the Council was very pleased with the attitude and commitment of the PCSO to date and that their presence was making a difference. The best way to maximize this would be to have them based at the Civic Centre as soon as possible.

Inspector Shannaghan stated that in respect to the recent introduction of the

Dispersal Order via Section 30 he confirmed that there had been a couple of recent 'operations' run in the area recently and that anti-social behaviour remains the biggest problem in the area.

6. **QUESTIONS**

Cllr Mrs P.Allen asked Inspector Shannaghan:

- 1) If the amount of Perton policing time for PCs Lampitt and Hossack was now reduced since the introduction of the PCSOs since recently they had not been so visible? Inspector Shannaghan replied that there was no reduction intended and the two PCs were available as previously.
- 2) Will the PCs and PCSOs be retained for Perton and not utilised elsewhere? Inspector Shannaghan replied that there was no intent to change the current arrangement and that the present situation would now continue.
- 3) In respect to the required encryption kit is it of relatively low cost to enable the Parish Council to assist with provision? Inspector Shannaghan replied that to his knowledge the issue was not one of budget but associated with the availability of the equipment.
- 4) Was he aware of any road traffic accidents at the St Andrews Drive chicane? Inspector Shannaghan replied that he had no specific knowledge of any accidents but he would check and report back.

RESOLVED that the Clerk will write to Chief Constable David Swift to seek his support for the rapid provision of the required IT encryption kit to enable the PCSOs to occupy the Civic Centre at the earliest time.

Cllr A.K.James asked the Inspector what was the current status of the use of the 'Buses Only' lane at Perton in the event of an accident closing Perton access as it did near to last Christmas. Inspector Shannaghan referred to the correspondence exchanged with the Clerk recently and explained that Staffordshire County Council Highways office were responsible for the opening of the Bus Lane and the establishing of the diversion routes and would do so

only following a direct request from the Police. Unfortunately this did not happen at Christmas due to a complication at the scene of the accident when it was mistakenly believed for a while that a child had gone missing from the accident scene, however on this occasion the diversion was overlooked. Inspector Shannaghan committed to double check the process with David Wright at Staffs CC Highways office.

There were no questions arising from the Chairmans report.

7. **VOTE OF THANKS**

The Chairman thanked those attending and invited all to light refreshments. Prior to closure Cllr Mrs P.Pitt also offered a vote of thanks to the Chairman and thanked him for his direction, leadership and an effective twelve months in office. She additionally thanked the Clerk and his Staff for all of the support given to the Chairman and the Parish Council.

The Meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.

Chairman
14th May 2007