

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of
PERTON PARISH COUNCIL
held at the Perton Civic Centre on
Tuesday 20th October 2009 @ 7:00pm**

Present Mrs CM Young [Chairman]
AK Black [Vice-Chairman]
Mrs P Allen
Mrs RA Heseltine [District Councillor]
Mrs S.Bott
Mrs AM James
DJ Billson [District & County Councillor]
AK James [District Councillor]
AA Bourke
D Fereday [District Councillor]
N.P.Caine (Joined meeting at 7.40 pm)
S.Bott

District Councillor R Moreton
Parish Clerk - Tony Tappenden
Members of the Public present: None

86/10 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Mrs PN Pitt, Miss C Duffell and D Heseltine.

87/10 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Cllr Mrs S.Bott and S.Bott declared personal and prejudicial interest in the proposed youth club given their close proximity to the proposed building site.

88/10 **PERTON YOUTH CLUB**

Cllr Mrs CM Young opened the meeting stating that the first consideration regarding the future of the youth club at Perton is the ownership of responsibility for Youth provision at Perton and it was agreed by all that the responsibility is owned by Staffs County Council.

It was then acknowledged that Staffs County Council has put on hold the Asset Management Programme whilst they conduct a review of the original decision given new circumstances. There was some disagreement about the actual details of the suspension of the decision so in order to avoid confusion the Clerk read aloud the letter from Graham Bott date 15th July, 2009 which states 'that no further action will be taken for the Youth Service to withdraw from those premises identified for disposal' pending a review in the light of circumstances.

Following questions regarding capital costs the Clerk distributed and explained a spread sheet relating to the costs identified in response to the Parish Council 'invitation to tender' and it was noted that with the funds already promised we still have a short fall in excess of £110,000 but this could possibly be reduced to a shortfall in the region of £52,000 with a contribution of £60,000 from Perton Parish Council which would potentially be possible if the budgets are stripped from other projects.

Cllr AK James said it is important to understand the position of Staffordshire County Council who started this issue with a decision to close the existing premises. However he said, what is their current view on this matter and what is their view on what we are considering, which he

said was most important because Staffordshire County Council may want to go in a different direction to ourselves following the review and any decision made by Perton Parish Council may not be guaranteed to be acceptable to Staffs CC.

Cllr Mrs P Allen said that due to health and safety issues the building may have to close rapidly if condemned. The only alternative options on Perton are the three schools and the church, none of which will have the capacity to accept the youth club, thus the building could be closed with no options open to us and the £50,000 Youth Bank grant will be lost and Staffordshire County Council could anyway have a problem rebuilding at the existing school site due to existing issues on and around the site.

Cllr Mrs CM Young said that the Youth Bank grant originates via Staffordshire County Council and why could they not use this money to refurbish their own building.

Cllr AK James added that the original plan was to move the Youth Club to Codsall and if we build on Perton could we find ourselves in competition with Staffordshire County Council.

Cllr DJ Billson in responding to the various queries said that there was a lot of confusion regarding the County Council's responsibility and stated that the responsibility was for Youth Provision and not the buildings to accommodate the Youth clubs. He also said that Inspector Andy Chapman had stated recently at the Locality Forum, that Anti-social Behaviour on Perton on Thursdays was greatly reduced because the Youth club is open.

Cllr S Bott asked if Perton Parish Council builds and owns the new premises, do we have any guarantees that Staffs CC will continue to provide Youth provision service.

Cllr DJ Billson responded saying that he had requested written commitment on this matter but also assured the Members that there are many other groups that would like to make use of this building. Additionally, he said that at the current time he was being told that our application for Planning Permission at the site is likely to be refused and will therefore be called in to Regulatory Committee. Therefore, we cannot start seeking additional funding until Planning Permission is granted, so he asked the Council Members for approval to seek a £50,000 plus loan to cover our current short-fall stating that the kids of Perton are worth it.

Cllr AA Bourke responded saying that whilst all the Members had shown their support for the continuation of the Youth Club, why does Staffs County Council not also see the value of Perton youth given they are the organisation at the root of this issue.

Cllr DJ Billson said that anti-social behaviour is prevalent on Perton because the kids have nothing to do and the youth club project will be very helpful in this matter. But he did say that so far there have been 16 objections against the planning application but if it is called-in it will have strong support from South Staffs Council Director for Planning.

Cllr Mrs S Bott asked why there is a problem with building at the middle School.

Cllr Mrs P Allen said that there had been many historic issues with residents around the school location because they had bought their homes not knowing that a youth club would be sited there. She was sorry to see the spending of large amounts of PPC cash but the facility is needed for a number of groups aside from the youth club members not least a group dealing with safety issues associated with vulnerable children.

Cllr AA Bourke said that the entire timescales relating to this matter are unreasonable given that we are currently in a waiting period due to the County Council 'decision evaluation' statement and that we are seeking to solve a problem that doesn't currently exist. He said that

this was a form of emotional blackmail and said if the £50,000 is available this year why can we not re-apply to the same fund next year and thus buy ourselves some time to wait for the outcome of the Staffs County Council evaluation.

Cllr DJ Billson responded saying that the funds are a firm offer this year but there may or may not be any funds available next year, thus waiting is a big gamble.

Cllr AA Bourke said that we are being held to ransom by Staffs CC because though we need and want a Youth club it is neither our responsibility nor capability to fund a new building and we are simply giving the County Council an opportunity to wash their hands of this matter and we should wait until the outcome of the review.

Cllr A Black asked how viable the new building would be if for any reason the Youth Service didn't occupy them.

Cllr Billson said that the question was irrelevant because Staffs CC Youth Service will contribute in the region of £8,000 per annum for use of the facility and further more Paula Westwood, from the Youth Service, also does a lot of work with excluded children and they would love to use it. However he additionally said, in support of Cllr Mrs P.Allens earlier statement that there are many groups that require the facility and it will be not be just a youth club but a community centre as well.

Cllr S Bott said that we already have a community centre that has excess capacity and is subsidised by council taxpayers so why have another. He pointed out that Cllrs Mrs P.Allens argument that the building at the school is an issue because it was imposed on the residents after they had bought their homes may be valid except for the fact that she is happy to inflict the same problem on those currently in the vicinity of the Pavilion. He said that the Scouts and T.A. are generally self supporting but asked who will manage the new centre, who will clean the new centre, and who will pay all the associated bills of the new centre. None of this has been assessed and to make such a decision without knowledge of the running costs is very foolish. *(Cllr NP Caine joined the meeting at this point 7.40pm)* Cllr Bott went on to say that many local residents in the vicinity of the Pavilion did not buy their homes in the knowledge that this change of use would take place and are very irate at the Council plans and will take legal action against these plans if they go ahead. He added that most anti-social behaviour in the area comes in from outside Perton with youths coming in via Dippons Lane and therefore the Pavilion and its local area is a major trouble spot for this reason.

Cllr Mrs R Heseltine said that Cllr Bott had in his previous statement shown a prejudicial interest in this matter and therefore both he and Cllr Mrs S Bott should not be allowed to vote on the matter.

Cllr AK James said that a unanimous decision had been reached long ago to proceed with the evaluation of this site and the appeal system stills exists via South Staffordshire Council and we are still within the democratic process.

Cllr Mrs R Heseltine re-stated that if we lose the promised funding we will have a big issue and Cllr DJ Billson said the decision had already been taken previously to proceed with the building.

Cllr AA Bourke insisted that this was not the decision made and that the decision had not been previously taken to build only to evaluate the Pavilion as the preferred location and that the Parish Council are trying to force a decision by emotional blackmail and it was proper that we should wait for the decision by Staffordshire County Council following their review as the suspension of the programme relates to the use of the existing building.

Cllr Mrs P Allen said that the Parish Council was committed to complete this project once we started spending money and the Parish Council would never spend money on plans and planning approval unless there was a planned and agreed intent to proceed to completion. She additionally stated that she was very confident that she could obtain funds from educational grants in order to facilitate the running costs of the building.

Cllr Mrs CM Young said that the previous point was absolutely not the case because she was aware of a similar significant spend on plans and planning approval for the Civic Centre premises that was done without a business plan and never went to completion and was therefore a waste of public money. Additionally Mrs Young said our Civic Centre has never yet broken even that she was most concerned because the capital cost is not currently available to us but at least we know the approximate upfront costs of this project the bigger worry is that we are signing up to a life time of running costs and we haven't got the first idea how much that will be.

Cllr AK James said that as there is currently no planning permission we are unable to move forward as yet so the only decision we can therefore commit too is to follow our chosen scheme through once we know the outcome of the Staffordshire County Council decision and have planning permission as appropriate.

Cllr A Black asked what would happen if there was a decision made to approval the planning permission and then we are challenged legally, could there be an injunction to stop the build.

Cllr DJ Billson stated that the current recommendation is to refuse permission but if this over turned there would be no right of appeal. Cllr Billson again requested approval from the Parish Council to take on a loan in the region of £50,000 to top-up the existing funds which are currently insufficient for the project.

Cllr Mrs CM Young said she found it ridiculous that residents can not appeal if planning permission is granted.

Cllr Mrs P Allen proposed that subject to the receipt of planning approval we should agree to see the project through to completion and this was seconded by Cllr DJ Billson.

Cllr AA Bourke said there are far too many negatives to be making a decision at the current time: there is no planning approval, no decision from Staffordshire CC in respect to their review and no funding in place for the capital requirement and ongoing costs.

Cllrs Mrs S Bott and S Bott left the room during voting.

RESOLVED that following a show of hands, with 8 in favour and 2 abstentions, that subject to the receipt of planning approval we will seek to obtain the necessary funding and move to completion of the building works.

DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 9th November 2009 @ 7.00 pm

The meeting closed @ 8.05 pm

Chairman
9th November 2009