# **Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting**

# **held on Wednesday 28th April 2021, 7.00pm**

Meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

## **PRESENT:**

Councillor Mrs PA Allen (Chairman of Parish Council )

AA Bourke, D Glynn (Vice- Chairman), N Caine, P Davis, Mrs L Dew,

K Elder, Mrs R Heseltine, C Rathbone, J Sherlock, J Turner, Mrs B Walters (part of meeting),

Parish Clerk Mrs B Hodgetts

Assistant Parish Clerk Mrs L Higgins

The Chairman opened the meeting with the sad news that an ex Parish Councillor had recently passed away. All in attendance stood and observed a minute’s silence.

## 1 - WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman welcomed everyone present.

## 2 - MINUTES

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 29th April 2019 were a true and accurate record.

No meeting was held in 2020 due to the Corona Virus Pandemic.

## 3 - PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN’S REPORT 2021

Following the local elections in May 2019, 11 Independent and 4 Conservative councillors were elected. Members were appointed to committees- Management, Finance, Perton Playing Fields Association and later Allotments, Youth Activities, Skatepark and Human Resources.

The precept for the Parish Council remained the same for 2019/20 and decreased slightly for 2020/21 as we recognise the difficult circumstances of the last 18 months and have used our reserves and Covid funding.

**Police Matters**

The main problems in our community have been theft of cars, theft from vans, burglaries, Anti-Social Behaviour and criminal damage, car parking, drug taking, litter and dog fouling. We are grateful to our two PCSOs, Ashley Tooth and Sian Fryer who have provided us with reports and updates on the incidents, arrests made and campaigns by the police in our area. We continue to press for more police presence as the PCSOs have limited powers.

**County Council Matters**

Our County Councillor, Keith James, has unfortunately been ill and unable to attend meetings for most of this time. He was presented with a clock to commemorate his 25 years of service with the Parish Council and made an Alderman of SSDC.

Flooding issues have now been mapped by County Council officers following recent extreme weather and a new pond arising off Gainsborough Drive resulted in flooding to many properties in the area. We now have 256 properties known to experience flooding and are monitoring the area. Flooding in Dippons Lane is currently being examined and all authorities and parties involved have met.

Speed Indicator devices have been ordered for Severn Drive and the installation of posts are awaited. The changing of priorities for the chicane traffic in that location have been discussed and several road surface issues.

The bus barrier has been out of action for a long time but at last an ANPR camera is to be installed. Also a pedestrian crossing is to be installed at the A41 crossroads. Continual complaints are being made re Heath House Lane footpaths.

We have so far been unsuccessful in getting a pedestrian crossing notice at Brownies.

**South Staffs District Council**

At the last election 3 Independent and 2 Conservative members were elected for Perton. Members have given regular reports at Parish Council meetings. Issues with weeds on roadways, potholes and streetlights have been reported. Vandalism to footbridges and fallen trees have been dealt with. Locality meetings have been held and liaison has taken place on flooding issues. Rats have been a continual nuisance in the central area [a national problem] and the pest control services are active.

The Local Plan designated two areas for new housing, firstly at the Golf course and then the field to the north of this site as safeguarded land. The largest application was for new housing at the site adjacent to the Golf Course which is for 160 homes, including 40% affordable homes. The site has been purchased by Housing Plus Group and we have been informed work will commence in June 2021. Liaison with the developers has been good.

The new Local Plan is currently under confidential discussion and should be out for consultation this summer. The traffic problems associated with the housing sites are a concern to the Council.

Section 106 payments have been negotiated which will provide allotments and money for youth activities.

The Boundary Review team is also currently looking at SSDC. **The Secretary of State has just given permission for a crematorium at the A41 crossroads.**

The Community Hub is being built in Codsall to provide extra facilities for offices and a doctor’s surgery and relocation of the Library. New commercial units are also being built in the enterprise areas.

The West Midlands Interchange [new rail hub] will be built on 300 acres near Gailey and the link between the M6 and M54 to allow traffic to travel northwards is being finalised.

**Bus shelters**

These are now being maintained by our caretaking staff and the new shelters have had less vandalism than previously. The bus service has varied according to lockdown instructions. A survey was conducted at Kingswood over the removal of the bus shelter by Codsall Parish Council. Another survey was conducted at Trescott to see whether there was sufficient support to have a bus shelter there. The surveys were not well supported.

**Transport to Codsall High School**

The Parish Council has supported the school with a grant to assist in the provision of minibuses to enable the safe arrival of pupils not able to access free transport. We have also received reports from PASST re the appeal to the Ombudsman over the County Council decision not to support these pupils.

**Planning applications**

The Parish Council has made comments on a large number of applications, particularly for extensions. We have also taken a keen interest in the detail for the new housing, particularly drainage, footpaths, road crossings, bus access and the new play area envisaged.

**Allotments**

A new committee has been set up to provide allotments at the golf course site and negotiations now mean that the developers will arrange the road access, main services, fences and plot marking, 60 half plots.

**Youth facilities**

Remaining funding was released to the Youth Club committee to fund a youth worker and pay the rent to the PPFA. The Youth Club was closed during the first lockdown and has been unable to meet since due to restrictions over the mixing of year groups and fear of the spread of infection.

A new group was set up to facilitate the provision of lighting at the MUGA and a new Senior Youth Group. Unfortunately these have been unable to proceed at the moment as the lockdowns have prevented school pupils meeting and funding has temporarily been diverted from these projects.

**Skatepark**

A proposed design to be installed in the outdoor gym area was finalised and costed. However it cannot be delivered without added funding. A person to make funding applications has been found and the project needs re-evaluation.

**Outdoor Gym**

This has been relocated around the upper lake to create the beginnings of a trim trail and has resulted in greater use of the equipment. The sign has also been relocated.

**Play Area and MUGA**

The new equipment on the play area has been very well used when we have been able to have this facility open. It has been shut periodically in line with Covid restrictions. Minor repairs have been necessary due to vandalism. Annual inspections have taken place.

**Planting**

We have been fortunate in receiving funding for planting the north traffic island on Wrottesley Park Road with bulbs. This project was funded by Bromford Housing Association as the roofing contractors were impressed by the cooperation of residents. The bulbs were planted by Wild About Perton to a design by Cynthia Tilley.

We have also received free trees due to the efforts of Keith Elder with the Woodland Trust and Forest of Mercia , with planting assistance from SSDC and Wild About Perton. Whips have been planted adjacent to the path along the River Penk and in the woodland and central park.

Wildflower planting is being encouraged in the central park and on Wrottesley Park Road.

**Litter Picking**

The Council took part in the Great British Spring Clean 2020. Several volunteers are still assisting and Phil Davis has organised regular litter picks and the Parish Council has provided equipment.

**Percy the Cobra**

During the lockdowns a project initiated by Christine Hawthorne involving painted stones for the body of a cobra received attention from young and old residents and a long ‘snake’ developed in Bluebell Wood. These stones have been removed to the Civic Centre and will be installed as a permanent memorial to Covid in the flower bed next to the play area, with the cooperation of SSDC.

**Grants**

Grants have been made to children’s football, the Wolverhampton NHS choir, Perton Playing Fields Association, the Christmas Fair committee for the tree, the STEM group at the Library, SUSSED sessions for young people in 2019 and the Kingswood Trust. Perton Village Show and the Carnival were supported in 2019.

Grants have been received from SSDC towards the loss of Civic Centre business.

**Parish Council participation**

We took part in the Crib Festival at The Church At Perton in December 2019. We also came second in the Best Kept Village competition for large villages in 2019 and we have a Dementia Friendly Civic Centre, Church and High Street. Members of Council have supported the residents of Trescott in clearing footpaths and in their campaign to restore the speed camera.

**Covid**

The pandemic has resulted in various closures of our Civic Centre, our play area and MUGA and immense disruption in children’s and adults’ lives with lockdowns affecting schools and businesses. The Clerk has additional delegated powers and we have taken advantage of the closure of the Civic Centre to undertake a **large-scale refurbishment.** The Lakeside Hall has been repainted, the heating system improved, the suspended ceilings replaced in the foyer, office and Ken Bott room; the corridors, Boardroom and office repainted. The offices have newer equipment, furniture and carpet. The paperwork archived is in the process of being collated. We have been pleased to host the well supported Community Testing facility and continuing NHS Pulmonary and Diabetic Retinopathy clinics.

Meetings have taken place digitally, staff have been furloughed at times and office staff have worked from the Civic Centre and remotely. Some meetings have been cancelled and meetings with other authorities have taken place mostly digitally.

**Community Support**

During the first lockdown we received £5000 in grants for community support and the Community Support Hub was formed with The Church At Perton. Vulnerable residents were helped with shopping, collection of prescriptions and even dog walking. We have helped the Kingsway Church in Wombourne and The Well in Wolverhampton with financial donations for the delivery of food parcels here.

I am deeply indebted to the owner of Town and Country Meats who used the car park in Gainsborough Drive for a mobile shop and in return donated 40 meat parcels per week to residents in Bromford and SSHA properties. Thank you very much to the housing officers who assisted with this.

At Christmas with a grant from SSDC, 45 meals were delivered to lonely and isolated residents with the cooperation of Café 29.

I also applied for a grant from the Community Foundation for Staffordshire during the second lockdown to provide activity bags for those shielding at home or experiencing loneliness. 150 bags were distributed to Corser’s Court and other households by the Community Support Group. The Library have started a jigsaw loan scheme.

A warm thank you to all the volunteers who have helped with these projects.

**Staff**

We are all grateful for the staff who have done their best in this unprecedented time of refurbishment and continually evolving government restrictions. I would especially want to thank Becky Hodgetts, our Clerk, for the exceptional support she has given to the Council, the Support Hub and to me personally in the organisation of the community support, coming over to open the Civic Centre for the distribution of meat packs, assisting with the Christmas arrangements, ordering items and arranging volunteers, liaising with the contractors during the refurbishment of the Civic Centre and reacting in emergency situations.

We have regretfully said goodbye to our Assistant Clerk, Alison Moreton, after 27 years of faithful service and to Graham Hawthorne who has retired as caretaker. We have a good team, including our litter wardens.

I would also want to take this opportunity to all those who have helped in our community and in Kingswood and Trescott, in any way during these 2 years. We have all learnt to value our people, our environment and our schools and businesses in new ways. It has been a great privilege to serve as Chair of the Parish Council for these 2 years.

Additional comments

Cllr D Glynn and Cllr AA Bourke thanked the parish staff for the hard work done through the pandemic.

## 4 - PARISHIONER QUESTIONS

## No questions raised by parishioners

## Meeting closed 7.14pm

Signed ....................................................... Date .........................

Chairman