# **Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting**

# **held on Monday 24th April 2023 at 7.00pm**

## **PRESENT:**

Councillor K Elder (Chairman of Parish Council )

Parish Clerk Mrs B Hodgetts

Assistant Parish Clerk Mrs L Higgins

Mrs PA Allen, AA Bourke, D Glynn, N Caine, Mrs L Dew, Mrs R Heseltine, C Rathbone, Mrs B Walters

12 members of the public

## 1 - WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman welcomed everyone present.

## 2 - MINUTES

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 25th April 2022 were a true and accurate record.

## 3 – CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD 2022-23

## This year three wards were given. 5 nominations had been received which was very encouraging. The Parish Council would encourage anyone to submit a nomination form for next year.

A community group award was given to the Crochet Fairies. The group remained anonymous but were presented with a number of balls of wool and needles. They put in hours of work, these brighten up the village.

The under 18 – A £25 Amazon voucher was awarded to Nathan Griffin for his fundraising efforts for Ukraine raising over £3,000.

The over 18’s category - An engraved clock was awarded to Sean McCann for creating and maintaining an area of land adjacent to his property along the river Penk.

8 residents left the meeting.

## 4 - PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN’S REPORT 2023

I was re-elected Chairman of Perton Parish Council in May 2022, and at the same meeting members were appointed to Parish Council Committees, Working Parties and to Perton Playing Fields Association. Following the end of the Queens Jubilee Year the Working Party was renamed Kings Coronation Working Party with a brief to plan celebrations for the Coronation on Saturday 6th May 2023.

Much of the work of the Parish Council is undertaken through a **framework of Committees and Working Parties.** All Parish Council and Committees meetings take place face to face; a requirement of legislation, however most Working Parties meet via Microsoft Teams, which saves on travel and meeting rooms. Parish Councillors have continued to participate in online Locality Forums, designed to facilitate improved working between the three tiers of local government in Staffordshire. Parish Councillors who in addition to attending monthly Parish Council meetings either Chair or participate in Council Committees and Working Parties are a particularly valuable asset to the life of a Parish Council.

The death of **HM Queen Elizabeth** on the 8th September led to the postponement of September Parish Council meeting and all meetings of Council Committee during the period of official mourning. The Church at Perton kindly opened their courtyard for the laying of floral tributes and opened a book of remembrance in the Church at Perton for residents. On the evening of the postponed September Parish Council meeting the Parish Council met in the Church courtyard, floral tributes were laid and a statement of sympathy and condolences was read.

The **precept** for the Parish Council increased slightly for 2022/23. In January 2023 the Parish Council agreed an outline budget of £430,091 and then agreed a precept of £225,000 for 2023/24. The required precept is an increase of 4.94% with the annual charge increase of £3.07p/annum based on a ‘Band D’ property. Much of the increase in expenditure was a reflection of an increase in basic costs brought about by inflation.

The **Health & Safety Working Party** is undertaking a very thorough review of all Parish Councils health & safety policies and procedures. Progress this year has included a workstation assessment for all Parish office staff, and newly adopted Health, Safety & Wellbeing, Legionella and Water Management, Asbestos, Absence Management, Fire, Emergency & Evacuation and First Aid Policies.

TheParish Council signed up to the **Civility and Respect Pledge** i.e. to treat all councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles. Integral to the pledge are good employment practice and good governance; both of which are subject to annual review. Also integral is ensuring that we seek professional help at the early stage of a problem, and that we always learn from best practice.

Following a recommendation from the Clerks Appraisal, the Parish Council decided to seek a **Foundation Award under the NALC Local Council Award Scheme**. An award will demonstrate that the Parish Council meets the requirementsfor operating lawfully, and according to standard practice.

Contact had been made with a representative of the Dutch ‘**Prinses Irene Brigade’** who were based at Wrottesley Camp during World War 2. Representatives of the Brigade plan to visit Perton for remembrance in 2023.

The Parish Council made various suggestions to Severn Homes about the naming of the **new housing development** and for road names which related to the history of the site and Perton. Severn Homes accepted some of the road names we suggested but chose their own name for the site.

**Queens Platinum Jubilee**

In conjunction with the Jubilee Working Party an ambitious programme of five organised celebratory events for the Queens Platinum Jubilee were put together i.e.:

The **Jubilee Rose Garden** was prepared and planted by Parish caretakers, Councillors and volunteers in December. 64 bare root rose plants, including several specimen Elizabeth rose plants were kindly donated by David Austin Roses, Albrighton. In addition a £750 grant was received for the preparation of the soil plus a donation of compost from a local resident.

A **commemorate book** on the Queens Jubilee along with a Jubilee bear was purchased for Perton First, Perton Primary Academy and Perton Middle School.

1500 **n**ew trees were planted along the Staffordshire/Wolverhampton boundary in support of the **Queens Green Canopy** in conjunction with Forest of Mercia’s Trees for Climate initiative. 20 of the trees planted were endangered Black Poplar. Unfortunately, due to a long spell of dry weather, some trees died but were replaced with more drought resistant varieties. An associated new footpath from Dippons Lane along the boundary to Richmond Drive was completed in December.

A free **Firework display** went ahead on 5th November thanks to Perton Middle School and donations from Parish Councillors. The firework display was a great success; an excellent family event. A lot of positive comments were received. The Parish Council are grateful to Parish Councillors and staff who stewarded during the evening. It is thought that between 1500 - 2000 people attended.

The **Big Lunch** produced by Dangerous Sheep during Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend in June was postponed due to poor weather and re-scheduled for Saturday 9th July as a **Family Fun Day**. Unfortunately, it was not as well attended as hoped but those attending appeared to enjoy the afternoon. The Parish Council is grateful to Parish staff, Parish Councillors and volunteers for their support stewarding the event, including preparing and clearing up the site

**Perton Jubilee Allotments**

Work towards opening Perton Jubilee Allotments on the Wrottesley Road site began last year after a two year hiatus due to the pandemic. The allotment site forms part of the Wrottesley Park housing development and is provided for the Parish under a Section 106 agreement. It is expected that ownership of the site will be transferred from Severn Homes to South Staffordshire Council and then to Perton Parish Council in the next few weeks.

Work has been completed by Severn Homes on preparing the site for the transfer of ownership including fencing the site, laying an access road and car park. Work to prepare the allotments ready for tenants i.e. 60 half plots with a 3.5M path down the centre and a 60cm path between each plot, plus water troughs, accessible plots and a compost area will get underway soon once the ownership and funds are transferred to the Parish.

Work on a tenancy agreement and rule book for allotment tenants has been completed and those people who put their names forward earlier for an allotment were contacted to confirm their interest and subsequently invited to a public meeting in January to update them on progress. Some 63 people attended and a positive and helpful discussion followed a presentation with lots of ideas and suggestions for the future. The Allotments Committee, including three public members have played an active role in advising and supporting the development.

**Working With Staffordshire County Council**

Our County Councillor has attended several Parish Council meetings during the year, providing a verbal report on County initiatives and helpfully fed back on on-going issues.

There are a number of **on-going** **County Highways issues** which come up at Parish Council Agenda meeting after meeting:

* The poor state of **Severn Drive** either side of the pelican crossing. The good news is that some money has been found by our County Councillor for Severn Drive next year.
* **Flooding issues on Dippons Lane** nearby the Severn Trent Pumping Station. County helpfully unblocked the drainage pipe under Dippons Lane, which has alleviated the problems somewhat, although low rainfall last year might not give us a true picture. Despite considerable effort we have not been able to persuade neighbouring landowners to clear the ditches alongside their land.
* **Potholes** that are not repaired because they don’t meet for the criteria for repair.
* Requests to limit speed to 30mph and a vehicle weight restriction on vehicles using Wrottesley Park Road.
* The delays to construction of an access road to Wrottesley Park because work on the necessary County Highways License has not been completed.

**Working With South Staffordshire Council**

District Councillors continue to provide regular monthly reports on a wide range of District meetings and initiatives.

**Perton Chill Out Club:** News that the South Staffordshire Council were to fund a Chill Out Club for 8-13 year olds in Perton from June was welcomed and a meeting sought with the organiser. Unfortunately there has been no progress with opening the Perton Club despite various offers of help and assistance. It is particularly disappointing that the benefits promised for our young people have not materialised.

**Public Open Sessions: Listening To People**

Members of the public have a statutory right to attend Parish Council meetings as observers and are also encouraged to participate in the public open session; always the first agenda item on the agenda.

Issues most frequently raised by the public i.e. public highways, public open space, flooding, water management & public order matters are not the responsibility of the Parish Council, but the Parish Council speaks up on issues raised by residents’ either directly or indirectly through the County Councillor or District Councillor. Issues raised by members of the public during the last 12 months have included:

Questions, about the **maintenance of kerbs, alleyways and verg**es and in particular the frequency and effectiveness of spraying and why some roads were swept whereas others were not. Homeowners whose bushes and trees over grow footpaths should be made to keep them under control. Our County Councillor reported the maintenance of kerbs and verges is an issue over the whole county. However the County did not have sufficient resources to spray more often.

Another resident raised the differing grass cutting regimes between the County Council which paid for a monthly cut of roadside verges in the growing season whereas the District Council cut public open space and some roadside verges twice a month. The visual impact of the different cutting regimes was particularly noticeable between the two sides of the road on the Parkway in Spring 2022. South Staffordshire Council whose Street Scene team cut the grass for their own land and for the County were challenged to come up with a way of reconciling the different cutting regimes so that the visual discrepancy was minimalized. Unfortunately they could not find a satisfactory way of minimalizing the impact without additional financial resources.

A resident praised the Parish Council for supporting South Staffordshire Councils management of the meadow grass areas. The resident was aware that not all residents agreed but they felt that we ‘*must look after our planet’* because ‘*mown grass has no biodiversity’*. The Church at Perton was praised for creating a pollinator friendly verge.

**Perton Green Spaces Management Plan:** A resident raised concerns about the maintenance of trees, the River Penk, and both lakes and was reminded that these issues would be included in the South Staffordshire Councils Perton Green Space Management Plan. It is disappointing that a draft Management Plan has not been produced as promised despite the benefit of so much community and Parish Council interest and input.

**Flooding Issues:** Residents living in Gainsborough Drive, Ayrton Close, Hepworth Close and Dippons Lane made the Parish Council aware of the recent flooding they had experienced. One resident had been flooded four times in the last 10 years. Other properties have experienced flooding to their garages and gardens.

It was recommended that drains should be routinely cleared. Flooding issues it was argued are complex, having a variety of origins with various agencies having responsibilities. Discussions with the County Flood Team and particularly their flood maps of Perton had usefully identified the ‘hot spots’ but ‘big solutions’ were difficult because of their complexity, cost and limited budgets. We were reminded that individual house centred ‘solutions’ were an approach adopted by Severn Trent Water.

Discussions of flooding issues in Perton will likely remain an on-going agenda item. Currently we are seeking a fact-finding meeting with Severn Trent to better understand the issues with surface water, highway drainage, and water management generally in Perton.

Many complaints were raised about the perceived poor record of the contractors working for **City Fibre** who began installing fibre cables under license from the County. Public notice of this work had been minimal. The complaints were elevated to our County Councillor and then to our Member of Parliament who met with City Fibre in October. It was reported that City Fibre were aware of the issues and that four penalty notices had been issued by County Council.

Trescott residents raised the issue of speeding traffic through Trescott on the **A454 Bridgnorth Road** requesting that the speed limit be lowered to 40mph. Trescott has limited pavements making crossing the road and walking along the road challenging in busy traffic. We were pleased to hear that subject to consultation County were proceeding with the Traffic Regulation Order lowering the speed limit through Trescott to 40mph.

A resident suggested that the **War Memorial** stone did not represent those that have given their life in service for their country. The war memorial stone, a glacial erratic left over from the last ice age was found in the subsoil when the Perton lakes were excavated and moved to its current position historically. Following discussion, the Parish Council agreed to explore options for an electric supply to the memorial and a scheme for improving the site, including perhaps a surrounding wall replacing the fence if finances permit in 2023/24.

Members of the **Silver Poplars Association** (Kingswood) attended a Parish Council meeting to introduce their Association and to explain some of the long standing issues between residents of the park home site and the site owner. The Association meets regularly at Perton Civic Centre.

Issues relating to **policing and ticketing for illegal parking and double p**arking including restricting access for emergency vehicles were raised by a resident.

**Supporting The Community**

The Parish Council has a **grant fund** to support volunteer groups and organisations, thereby improving the range of local services and activities available for Perton residents. During 2022/23 the Parish Council supported various local organisations. i.e.: Kingsway Food Bank: £500, Perton Art Group: £500, Perton Library Science Fair: £480; Perton Cuppa Club: £500.

In addition, **concessionary room hire** at the Civic Centre was granted to: Perton Middle School for their presentation evening in the Lakeside Hall, to the Dyspraxia Foundation for parent meetings, for Perton Christmas Fair and Perton Carnival.

A **Christmas lunch** was provided at the Wrottesley Arms for lonely and isolated residents. We were grateful to the Manager of the Wrottesley Arms for her support as well to the volunteers, including Parish Councillors who provided support on the day.

The Parish Council provided and equipped a storage room in the Civic Centre for the **Kingsway Food Bank**. A local store enables the Food Bank to better support Perton families. Shortly after the room was set up the Parish was delighted to receive an anonymous donation of tinned and dried food which filled up all the shelving.

The **Citizen of the Year Award** aims to acknowledge and celebrate the achievement of members of the community i.e., somebody who makes a contribution to family, school or the environment through voluntary effort. Three nominations were selected for an Award this year as follows: Under 18 Category: Nathan Griffin, Over 18 Category: Sean McCann and Group Award: The Crochet Fairies

In consultation with Lakeside Surgery the original **Dr Nightingales Bench** was replaced with a more secure bench by the Parish Council following repeated vandalism. The new bench was located in the same place as the original bench overlooking the Upper Lake. The original bench was re-sited in Perton Library garden.

**Working With Staffordshire Police & The Staffordshire Commissioner**

Our local PCSOs, attend Parish Council meetings as their duties allow providing Councillors with written **monthly report and updates** on incidents, arrests, and campaigns by the Police in our area. In November, the PCSOs report used a new pro forma report, which better communicated Perton crime statistics and Policing operations of note.

The Parish Council welcomed the **reorganisation of local policing** and particularly the return of the response team to Codsall, headed up by a dedicated Chief Inspector, and an Inspector.

The Parish Council organised and hosted a second meeting with the **Staffordshire Commissioner, Ben Adams** in November, with representatives from Bilbrook, Codsall, Pattingham and Perton.

Ben Adams was asked to reflect on progress since the previous meeting. He highlighted in particular:

* A new Chief Constable and new Chief Fire Officer both experienced officers, now in place to ensure services are led properly.
* A new local policing model for South Staffordshire, which included an improved commitment to neighbourhood policing and roads policing.
* An increase in Police morale with a Police team better able to work with the community, with local knowledge and information and engaging on every level.
* More money has been found for ANPR cameras. The long promised ANPR camera in the bus lane was finally installed last April and to November 2022 59 tickets had been issued.

Ben Adams argued much was still to be done particularly to improve communications and response times, to identify vulnerability and to improve investigations. County (drug) lines remain an on-going issue, as well as emergency response to burglary which he argued was not rapid enough.

**Perton Civic Centre and the Perton Parish Team**

**Perton Civic Centre** has provided a meeting place for social, educational and community activities in Perton for over 40 years and has established many long term relationships with individuals and organisations who organise a wide range of activities at the Centre including self-help groups, exercise, talks, performances, family parties, weddings and anniversaries. More recently Perton Civic Centre has become a service centre for the NHS pulmonary and diabetic eye screening service, a development welcomed because these services are now more accessible for Perton residents. All these users of our Civic Centre are now also an important source of income raising some £76,142 this year.

And finally many thanks to our friendly and supportive **Parish Team**. I am very grateful to the Parish Clerk, Becky Hodgetts, for her wise counsel during a very busy and demanding year. To Assistant Clerk, Louise Higgins for her advice and support to the Planning and Finance Committees, and on many other matters. And thanks also to Administrative Assistant Sue, Caretakers Hugh & Richard, Caroline the cleaner, and litter pickers John Leaver and John Dockery for all their helpful support during the past 12 months. Thank you.

## 5 – QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE REPORT

A vote of thanks was given for the report.

There are always compliments about the Civic Centre.

Thanks for their service was expressed to Councillors AA Bourke and Mrs L Dew who have decided not to stand for re-election.

Cllr Mrs Dew has successfully applied for grants on behalf of the Playing Fields Committee. Cllr AA Bourke has been a councillor for 20 years. Both will be missed.

## 6 – PARISHIONER QUESTIONS

River management and flooding was discussed. There are a lot of issues that need to be considered. To raise all the issues with all relevant parties.

Questions were raised about the delay in creating the access road to the new development. The developers are waiting for approval from County Highways.

## Meeting closed 7.48pm

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

Chairman