# **Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting**

# **held on Monday 25th April 2022, 7.00pm**

## **PRESENT:**

Councillor K Elder (Chairman of Parish Council )

Parish Clerk Mrs B Hodgetts

Mrs PA Allen D Glynn, N Caine, P Davis, Mrs L Dew, K Elder, Mrs R Heseltine, Mrs A James, J Sherlock, Mrs B Walters

2 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 28th April 2021 were a true and accurate record.

## 3 – CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD 2021-22

## Unfortunately Mrs Christine Hawthorne was unable to attend to receive her award in recognition for her involvement in the Covid Cobra during lockdown. The Clerk will deliver the award and bouquet.

## 4 - PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN’S REPORT 2022

**Parish Council**

I was elected Chair of the Parish Council in May 2021, and at the same meeting members were appointed to Parish Council committees i.e., Management, Finance, Allotments, Planning and Human Resources. Also, to Perton Playing Fields Association.

In June, the Health & Safety Working Party was set up to review and update health and safety policies and procedures, and the Skatepark and Youth Activities Working Parties were combined into a Joint Youth Working Party to take initiatives for young people forward. In September, a Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Working Party was appointed to begin work on celebrations for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee year in 2022.

All Parish Council and Council Committee meetings take place face to face, however most Working Parties have moved to online working utilising Microsoft Teams. Parish Councillors have participated in online Locality Forums, established to facilitate improved working between the County Council, the District Council and Parish Councils in South Staffordshire. Similarly, Perton Parish Council has been an active member of the Climate Change Forum set up by the District Council with County Council and Parish Council involvement. Perton has recently benefitted from a £500 climate change grant from the District Council, which will be used to upgrade to energy efficient lighting of the Civic Centre Small Hall.

The precept for the Parish Council decreased slightly for 2021/2022 and increased slightly for 2022/23 as the importance of investing in staff training for staff recently appointed and CCTV equipment for the centre of Perton to counter anti-social behaviour, was recognised.

For most of 2021 the Parish Council met in the Lakeside Hall to reflect the ongoing need to social distance, protecting staff, public and members. In March 2022, the Parish Council returned to the Boardroom after a 2-year absence.

**Public Open Sessions**

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. Members of the public may speak for up to 3 minutes and are asked to be brief and to the point.

There was a noticeable increase in public attendance at Parish Council meetings during the Summer and Autumn. There were challenges managing public input in the Lakeside Hall, particularly in relation to acoustics and ensuring that those who wanted to speak could be heard, and the larger numbers of people who wanted to speak.

The topics raised in these sessions were diverse for example: Registration of an Asset of Community Value; Anti-social behaviour; Desilting of lakes, poor grounds maintenance including cutting of grass; Litter and fly-tipping; Geese/dog fouling & rats; Speeding & community Speedwatch; Traffic calming; Illegal use of the bus lane; Safety and Anders Square; Vehicles obstructing pavements; Concerns about funding available for repairs to the Middle School.

**Police Matters**

The main problems in our community have been theft of cars and vans; burglaries; anti-social behaviour and criminal damage; car parking; drug offences, litter, and dog fouling. However, the Police have evidenced considerable activity to tackle major crime in our community including cross boundary operations with West Midlands Police; surveillance operations; ANPR cameras on major roads and targeting anti-social behaviour. Plus, many arrests.

Chief Inspector Dave Wain, Commander of the Police Team in South Staffordshire attended a Parish Council meeting, where he addressed Councillors and residents’ concerns directly. CI Wain also attended a special meeting of Parish Councillors called to discuss how policing in our area could be more effective, including increasing Police presence and better response times.

The Parish Council also raised these issues with the Staffordshire Commissioner for Police, Fire & Crime, Ben Adams at a meeting in Perton with neighbouring Parishes. In addition, four Parish Councillors joined CI Wain on patrol in Perton one Friday to better understand local policing issues.

We are grateful to our two PCSOs, Ashley Tooth and Sian Fryer who continue to provide us with monthly reports and updates on incidents, arrests, and campaigns by the Police in our area, and to the other Police Officers who have joined us at Parish Council meetings from time to time.

**County Council Matters**

New elected County Councillor, Jak Abrahams has attended several Parish Council meetings during the year, providing a report. Jak also called a public meeting to discuss Severn Drive and the issues facing residents of Corser’s Court i.e., difficulties crossing the road, worn road surface, problems with the current priority at the chicane, and speeding motorists. Jak funded a 14-day vehicle count and speed survey on Severn Drive which may suggest that the installation of a speed indicator device by the Parish Council last year is having some positive impact on speeding. The Parish Council have recently agreed to move the device to a section of the Parkway to see whether it has a similar impact.

Flooding in Dippons Lane remains an ongoing issue. A meeting, facilitated by Jak in Dippons Lane last year, which brought together all the authorities and parties involved, helped to clarify what action needed to be taken. However, action by one of the parties and/or authorities to pay for the work remains problematic.

The long promised ANPR camera for the bus lane was finally installed in April 2022, but the impact of the new camera on illegal use has yet to be assessed. A pedestrian crossing has been installed at the A41 crossroads, but there has been no progress with a pedestrian crossing notice at Brownies.

A number of events during the year i.e., improvements at the A41 crossing, an extended Police investigation on the A454, works by Cadence & road works for the new housing, illustrated that the 2-road access to Perton had the potential to severely restrict incoming and outgoing traffic when one or both access roads was blocked or restricted. Despite various options considered during the year i.e., a third access road, it is apparent that there are no easy solutions to the problem.

**South Staffs District Council**

District Council members continue to provide regular reports at Parish Council meetings. A wide range of issues have been raised for example: parking around schools; damage to the overnight parking barrier at Kingswood; issues faced by Trescott residents from traffic on the Bridgnorth Road; consultation on new housing; concerns about the limited powers of PCSOs; dog fouling along Dippons Lane and near schools*;* rats in the central area*;* resident concerns about grass cutting and cutting back of overhanging trees; the increasing use of Wrottesley Park Road by heavy lorries; the installation of additional litter bins; issues with weeds on roadways, potholes and streetlights reported and delayed repairs.

**Proposed Management Plan for Perton’s Green Spaces**

In July, Ryan Taylor, from the District Council attended a Parish Council meeting to propose a management plan for all Perton’s green spaces. The plan to include all the relevant authorities, residents, landowners, and voluntary groups plus signage, access, use of chemicals & biodiversity. A public consultation was proposed in August to allow a more focussed view of what residents would like to see.

In October Ryan Taylor with colleague Mark Jenkinson, returned to provide an update including on the consultation. The consultation confirmed that residents use the main areas of open space for walking, wellbeing, and exercise. 105 residents thought there was no problem with the sites but 306 thought they needed improving. The most frequently raised issue was pathway maintenance. Negative comments included the presence of rats, unpruned shrubs, and uncut roadside verges. There were comments both for and against dredging the river Penk and for and against wild meadow areas.

Ryan and Mark confirmed that they with work with the Parish to agree which areas should remain as wildflower meadows. Also, that any dredging of the lakes will need to be assessed with specialists and partners and will require a cost benefit analysis. They agreed to remove self-set trees from the river channel and ensure that the grills are kept clear and suggested that a completed draft plan will be used to support a business case for more resources.

In January, a report on the state of the river Penk with recommendations, prepared by a specialist freshwater consultancy on behalf of the Environment Agency was circulated to members.

In February, the Parish Council agreed that there should be wildflower meadows on three central sites but also that a serious cutback of woodland edges was required. Also, that the report on the river Penk, should be forwarded to Severn Trent, the county Flood Team and the District Council to be formally considered.

**Consultation about ‘The Local Plan’**

The new Local Plan which will last until 2037 has been published by the District Council and has been open for public consultation. Perton's contribution as a Tier 2 village is the existing new housing development and the safeguarded land to the north for approximately 60 more new homes. There will be no more planned housing for Perton until highways and transport issues have been resolved. The District Council is currently assessing all comments received.

**Boundary Commission Review**

The Parish Council submitted evidence to the Boundary Review team last year, after the Commission indicated that the number of Perton District Councillors was to be reduced from 5 to 4, with an average of 2133 electors/District Councillor sought. Achieving the average number of electors in each of Perton’s 3 District Wards required some redrawing of ward boundaries; a recommendation to rename Perton Dippons, Perton Wrottesley and making a persuasive case for the retention of Kingswood and Trescott within Perton Parish. Our agreed submission we believed addressed: community identities and interests of our Parish; electoral equality for Perton’s electors and effective and convenient local government for our residents. Our submission was accepted by the Boundary Commission and will be implemented in 2023.

**Planning applications**

Planning applications for review by the Parish Council began to increase as the COVID related restrictions were eased.

**Severn Homes Housing & Parish Allotments**

News from Severn Homes that building work was to start on the Wrottesley Road site was welcomed after a 2-year delay due to the pandemic. The Allotments Committee began meeting again and immediately started work on a tenancy agreement and a rule book for the new allotments. Also, all those who had originally expressed an interest in an allotment were contacted to see if they were still interested. In addition, architects were appointed to map the site, to clarify how many allotments could be accommodated and the amount of parking space and community space available.

Decisions were also taken to fence the site for security and for rabbit proofing; to connect to a water and electricity supply and to construct toilet facilities, although currently the estimated cost of these facilities is still awaited. The Parish has also sought to clarify the arrangements for the release of the S106 grant which will pay for this development. We have also received news that the Patron of the Allotment Society, HRH Prince Charles, has given approval that any allotment site created during the Jubilee year can include ‘Platinum Jubilee Allotments’ in the name given to the site.

**Queen’s Platinum Jubilee**

A Platinum Jubilee Working Party was appointed in September to recommend how Perton should celebrate Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee in 2022. It was decided that any celebrations should be spread over the year rather than around the Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend in June.

Various celebratory activities were explored by the working party and decisions made by the Parish Council to proceed with the development of a Jubilee Rose Garden, to purchase and distribute a commemorate book on the Queens Jubilee to Perton Schools, to organise a Big Lunch/Picnic in the Park on 5th June with entertainment and to plant new trees on the playing fields along the Staffordshire/Wolverhampton boundary in conjunction with Forest of Mercia’s Trees for Climate initiative in support of the Queen’s Green Canopy. The feasibility of a firework display in November is still being explored.

**Perton Playing Fields Association**

Seven Parish Councillors represent the Parish on the Perton Playing Fields Association (PPFA) along with representatives of the local community and sports clubs. During the year, the Chair (Chris Evans) resigned and was replaced by the Treasurer (Councillor Clive Rathbone). The PPFA Committee requested the Parish take over the Treasurer’s function which was agreed. We are grateful to Chris Evans for his energy and enthusiasm managing the day-to-day affairs of the PPFA over many years.

**Youth Activities**

The new Youth Working Party looked afresh at proposals to construct a skatepark, install lighting and organise activities for the MUGA court and set up a senior youth club. Following advice from Staffordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS), the Parish Council completed a public consultation on the three proposals. 222 responses were received primarily from Perton adults. All those who responded were by a majority in favour of the three projects. The next stage of the consultation will involve young people more directly.

The Youth Club, at the Pavilion has remained closed due to ongoing restrictions over the mixing of year groups and fear of the spread of infection. News that the District Council were to fund new youth provision for 8–13 year-olds in Perton from June was welcomed and a meeting sought with the organisers Enquiring Minds to find out how the Parish might provide support.

**Play Area and MUGA**

The equipment in the play area continues to be very well used. However, vandalism to the safety flooring has meant continuing repairs. The annual inspection of the play equipment raised only low and very low issues which civic centre staff were able to remedy.

**Civic Centre**

Ongoing historical problems with the heating and hot water system in the Civic Centre led to various meetings with a specialist advisor. Various options were considered however installing individual water heaters at the taps was considered the most cost effective and implemented.

**Litter Picking & Maintenance of the Southern Road Traffic Island**

A volunteer group led by Phil Davis continues to organise quarterly litter picks and another volunteer group, organised by Wild About Perton, has undertaken ongoing maintenance of the southern road traffic island. The Parish Council are grateful for their ongoing commitment.

**Percy the Cobra**

During the lockdown, a project was initiated by Christine Hawthorne involving painted stones for the body of a cobra, painted by young people and their families in Bluebell Wood. These stones have been relocated as a permanent memorial to Covid in the flower bed next to the play area. In recognition of Christine’s initiative which did so much for many families isolated during the lockdown, the Parish Council have decided to honour her with the 2022 Citizen of the Year Award.

**Grants**

Grants have been made to Perton Rainbows (£300 to provide resources), Perton Crafters’ too (£300 towards room hire and resources), Perton First School (£500 towards books), Lakeside Community Church (£500 towards installing a hearing loop system in Lakeside Hall) & Perton Carnival (£400 for insurance).

COVID-19 related grants totalling £19,559.59 have been received from South Staffordshire Council.

**Community Support**

For a second year at Christmas, Cafe 29 prepared 27 meals which were delivered to lonely and isolated residents, using the COVID-19 Support Fund. Demand was lower this year due to relaxing COVID restrictions. A warm thank you to the volunteers.

Perton Parish Council continues to support Kingsway Food Bank who are supporting various families in Perton with food parcels. A recent meeting organised by The Church at Perton identified a growing need for food support in Perton. Currently various options, including locally organised deliveries and a community table, are being considered to increase the offer locally to people in need.

**Staff**

After the difficulties of the past 2 years, there was an opportunity to review the current staffing structure and appoint a permanent Assistant Parish Clerk and Administrative Assistant as proposed by the HR Committee. Both appointments have now been made.

I am grateful to the Parish Clerk, Becky Hodgetts and to the Assistant Clerk, Louise Higgins for their support during the past 12 months. Chairing a Parish Council is a new experience for me with a lot of learning required on my part, so having a wise and very experienced Parish Clerk for advice along the way has been especially important. It is evident that Perton Parish has a friendly and supportive team of Parish Council staff. It has been a great privilege to serve as Chair of the Parish Council for the past year.

## 5 – QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE REPORT

A vote of thanks was given for the report.

The issue of the chicane in Severn Drive was raised. This matter is still ongoing and should be looked at in greater depth. It was acknowledged that until more money comes from Central Government this situation will not improve.

The decision for the parish council to hold a Platinum Jubilee Big Lunch was discussed. To see what other businesses are doing especially the public houses.

The parish council to monitor the grass cutting and ensure that only agreed areas are left as meadow grass.

Tettenhall Pool Equestrian Centre in Dippons Lane – Councillors to update the council at the next meeting if possible.

## 6 – PARISHIONER QUESTIONS

The parishioners present raised questions on South Staffordshire blue recycling bags that are due to be delivered. The bags will be for paper and cardboard only. Concerns were raised over the weight and whether some will struggle to lift it out for collection. It may be possible to ask for an additional bag if required.

## 7 – PRESENTATION FROM WASTE SAVVY STAFFS

A presentation was given showing the merits of recycling and what can and can’t be recycled and how this differs in different location. It was agreed that it was a very informative presentation. Waste Savvy Staffs are looking for volunteers in the south of the region to give these talks locally.

## Meeting closed 8.43pm

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

Chairman