

Audlem Parish Council

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting  
held at the Methodist Church, Shropshire St, Audlem,  
on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 7.00pm**

Present:

Councillors:

Phillip Baker,  
Tim Brooksbank,  
Charles Cavill,  
Carl Dovey,  
David Jones,  
Ryan Jones (in part),  
Will Pearson,  
Paul Smart

Absent:

Councillors:

David Lambourne,  
Dave Siddorns

In Attendance:

Lee Jakeman (Locum Clerk)

**24/114 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Jones

(Clerk's note: Councillor Jones arrived at the meeting during the confidential session)

**24/115 Declarations of Interest**

Nil

**24/116 Requests for Dispensation**

Nil

**24/117 Public Session**

- a. **RESOLVED that Standing Orders of the Council be suspended, to allow public participation in accordance with Standing Orders 3e-j.**

A number of members of the public asked questions which are summarised below along with responses:

Why were meetings now held on Thursdays?

- Due to the limited availability of the Locum Clerk on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Previously the Council had said that a monthly update on the ongoing police investigation in to missing funds would be provided why is there no update this evening?

- Updates will be provided as and when new information is received – there had been no developments since the last meeting (at which a statement had been provided).

A request to plant a memorial tree in Turnpike Field was made.

- Matters raised by the public at the meeting should relate to specific items on the agenda. The member of the public was asked to submit the request to the Clerk in the first instance and that might prompt it to be a future agenda item.

Comment was raised about the payments approved last month and the cost of some utilities.

- Invoices are reviewed for accuracy and in the case of utilities they will be measured against meter readings.

Comment was raised about the Council having all the documentation regarding Turnpike Field matters.

- The Council is currently reviewing all documentation to ensure that it has all relevant information.

At the previous meeting it was suggested that the General Reserve figure for the Council was circa £149k whereas there is only circa £70k in the bank.

- It was explained the point had been raised at the previous meeting by Councillor Brooksbank and that the end of year accounts (which have not yet been signed off by the external auditor) appear to still include funds that it is alleged have gone missing (circa 2022) and it was this figure that had been quoted at the last meeting. For budgeting purposes, the Clerk would be using the bank balance as at 31 Mar 24 as the general reserve figure (that being £37,729).

**b. RESOLVED: that Standing Orders are reinstated and the meeting continues with remaining items on the agenda**

**24/118 Confirmation of Previous Minutes**

**RESOLVED: to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024.**

**24/119 Bank Reconciliation**

**Members considered the following planning application(s):**

- RE: 24/4719/HOUS Householder: Site address: 3 Moorsfield Avenue, Audlem, Crewe, Cheshire East, CW3 0LA:Development Proposal: Single storey rear extension and new dormers/velux to front elevation main roof. [Cheshire East | pa.cheshireeast.gov.uk | Application | 397992](https://pa.cheshireeast.gov.uk/Application/397992).** Members discussed the application and were generally supportive of the application, and while there was comment about one of the windows on the first floor being of concern members did not feel the need to respond formally to the application (no comment being the outcome).

## 24/120 Bank Reconciliation

**RESOLVED:** that the bank reconciliations for November and December 2024 be confirmed and that the Chair be instructed to sign them.

(Clerk's Note: The Balance of the Lloyds Bank Account as of 31 December 2024 stood at £72,922.00)

## 24/121 Precept/ Budget 2025/26

Members considered a report from the Clerk which included 3 options and a recommendation for a budget for 2025/26, and an amount of precept to be demanded from Cheshire East Council.

Members acknowledged that despite their best efforts, with the significant changes to the make-up of the Council in recent months (7 new councillors appointed in December 24), and the recent appointment of a Locum Clerk, that the Council is not as familiar with the details of the finances as it would wish to be.

While they were keen to minimise the level of taxation, there was some nervousness regarding some potential expenditure that could not precisely be estimated; this included potential significant spend on the monument, the ongoing risk with costs relating to Turnpike field (legal and site management).

It was suggested that a 'contingency' line be added to the budget version 1.

It was proposed and seconded that £10k be added as a contingency.

An amendment to the proposal was tabled and seconded - to have the contingency amount set at £5k. The motion was not carried.

**RESOLVED:** to approve Version 1 of the budget options for FY 25/26, with the addition of new contingency line in the budget of £10k. (*precept of £89,878, General reserve target 31 Mar 26, £36,937 and a Band D equivalent of £85.20, percentage increase of 12.52%*).

AND

**RESOLVED** that a precept be issued, requiring Cheshire East Council to pay Audlem Parish Council £89,878.00 (Eighty Nine Thousand, Eight Hundred and Seventy Eight Pounds) to meet its expenditure for the financial year 2025/26.

## 24/122 Payments for Approval

**RESOLVED:** to approve a list of payments totalling **£5,721.72** (see Appendix 1)

## 24/123 Monument in the Square

Members received a brief from Cllr Dovey regarding the condition of the monument and the need to effect some repairs. Members noted an initial quote for works.

**RESOLVED** that Cllrs Dovey and Smart, supported by the Clerk, should obtain appropriate quotes for the envisaged works, and that they should investigate, identify and if appropriate submit grant funding applications.

(Clerk's note: Current Financial Regulations permit quotes (as opposed to tendering) for works under £60K)

#### 24/124 Waste Bins

Members were informed that the bins used by the Lengthsman and are now situated on the Car Park. They were relocated following the Cemetery Committees. request to remove them from the Cemetery Area. Following fly tipping, these bins are now locked.

Members were advised that the Green Waste Bins located at the Methodist Church, used by APC, ADAS to enhance the Village, require the new fee to be paid to CE for emptying. This has been paid for by APC in the past.

**RESOLVED** to fund the renewal of the 12 month contract with Cheshire East Council, subject to the cost being in line with the fee charged to householders for this service.

#### 24/125 Turnpike Field

Members raised concerns regarding works to trees on and around Turnpike field, noting that some works had been completed in recent months. Members agreed to identify Immediate works and inform the Clerk (with reference to any previous Tree Surveys and subsequent professional opinions) who would confirm appointment of any contractors, in line with budget limits and financial regulations.

#### 24/126 Chesire East Car Park

Members were advised that the Chair recently met with the Chesire East Ward Councillor and others to discuss the potential of agreeing to suspend parking charges for certain days of the year, when there are significant events on in the village. The Chair is keen to meet with groups that would benefit from some suspension of parking charges and see if the Council can facilitate a combined request to cover all / prioritise events.

**RESOLVED** that the Chair and/or Deputy Chair meet with local groups who would want to suspend parking charges for a number of community events held throughout the year and identify priorities, and for those 'priority events to be identified, with the intention that these be brought to Council for the Council to then consider and submit a 'community' request to Chesire East Council for desired dates for the suspension of parking charges.

#### 24/127 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Members considered in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, that the following item(s) will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to the contractual matters and therefore **RESOLVED: that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded.**

## 24/128 Parish Clerk Recruitment

Members considered a report from the Locum Clerk.

Members noted that while they currently had the services of a Locum Clerk, there is a pressing need to look to recruit a permanent parish clerk.

Members asked that the Clerk endeavour to produce a draft job description, person specification, recruitment process and associated recruitment documents for consideration at the Council's next meeting.

Members noted that the current Locum Clerk was only able to provide up to 15 hours per week support to the Council and that previous clerks had averaged around 25 hours per week. Members noted that contracted hours for previous clerks had been 20 hours per week, however the issues relating to Turnpike Field and the ongoing police investigation appear to have prompted additional hours. It was acknowledged that there was a requirement to source an additional 10 or so hours per week until the recruitment of a permanent clerk is complete, if the Council is to progress routine matters promptly alongside those more significant issues facing the Council.

Members acknowledged that the hours will need reviewing once the Council is content that the Turnpike Field issues are resolved and working normally, and that the potentially lost funds are either refunded or written off.

**RESOLVED** to delegate to the Locum Clerk (in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair) the authority to appoint (on a temporary or short-term contract basis) a deputy/assistant to the Clerk, to provide additional staffing hours (that between the Clerk and deputy average 25 hours per week) and until such time as a permanent clerk can be recruited.

----- **END** -----

## Payments Approved by Council 9 January 2025

Invoice Date	Folio	Payee	Service	nett	VAT	Gross	Payment date	Payment Type
30/11/24	19	Michael Dolan	Lengthsman Salary - Nov 2024	531.67	-	531.67	18/12/24	via ChALC
4/12/24	20	Audlem Methodist Church	Hall Hire - Councillor Induction 4 Dec 24 - Inv 125	25.00	-	25.00	18/12/24	via ChALC
12/12/24	21	Audlem Methodist Church	Hall Hire 12 Dec - Council meeting Inv 127	40.00	-	40.00	18/12/24	via ChALC
1/9/24	22	Then Media	TNS-16681 Website and emails September 24	29.00	5.80	34.80	18/12/24	via ChALC
1/10/24	23	Then Media	TMS-17035 Website and emails October 24	29.00	5.80	34.80	18/12/24	via ChALC
1/11/24	24	Then Media	TMS-17223 website and emails November 2024	29.00	5.80	34.80	18/12/24	via ChALC
1/11/24	25	Then Media	TMS-17472 website and emails December 2024	29.00	5.80	34.80	18/12/24	via ChALC
4/10/24	26	Shire Accts	Inv SHI-2390 Payroll fees 6 Oct 24 - 5 Apr 25	106.5	21.30	127.80	18/12/24	via ChALC
15/10/24	27	PHS Group	PHS Toilet sundries 29 Sep 24 - 19 Jan 25- Inv 70925299	375.81	75.16	450.97	18/12/24	via ChALC
16/12/24	28	PHS Group	PHS Toilet sundries 20 Jan 25- 19 Apr 25 Inv 71042473	209.66	41.93	251.59	18/12/24	via ChALC
4/12/24	29	3 Counties Cleaning	INV 775 - Toilets cleaning November 2024	410.00	-	410.00	20/12/24	via ChALC
19/12/24	30	Lengthsman	Lengthsman Salary - December 2024	531.67		531.67	20/12/24	via ChALC
1/10/24	31	Scribe	INV 7190 - SCRIBE Accts Subscription 1-31 October 2024	55.00	11.00	66.00	01/10/24	D/D
19/11/24	32	Lloyds	Bank Charges Nov 24	8.50		8.50	19/11/24	D/D
1/11/24	33	Scribe	INV 7480 - SCRIBE Accts Subscription 1-30 November 2024	55.00	11.00	66.00	01/11/24	D/D
4/11/24	34	EDF	Inv KI-44765882-0005- Electric 1-31 October 2024	34.09	1.70	35.79	19/11/24	D/D
1/12/24	35	Scribe	INV 7824 - SCRIBE Accts Subscription 1-31 December 2024	55.00	11.00	66.00	02/12/24	D/D
6/11/24	36	Water Plus	wp-INV07374825 - Public Toilets Water/Waste 5 Oct - 4 Nov 24	105.21	-	105.21	19/11/24	D/D
2/12/24	37	EDF	KI-44765882-006 Electric 1 -30 November	59.05	2.95	62.00	17/12/24	D/D
17/12/24	38	Lloyds	Bank Charges Dec 24	8.50	-	8.50	17/12/24	D/D
6/12/24	39	Water Plus	wp-INV07656735 - Public Toilets Water/Waste 5 Nov - 4 Dec 24	100.92	-	100.92	20/12/24	D/D
1/1/25	40	LS Jakeman	Locum Clerk Services 24 Oct to 31 Dec 24	2,694.90	-	2,694.90		via ChALC
			<b>Sub Total</b>			<b>5,721.72</b>		

