



AUDLEM
PARISH COUNCIL

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**Minutes of meeting of Audlem Parish Council
held in the Methodist Church, Shropshire St. Audlem
on Wednesday 6th September 2023 at 7.00pm.**

Present: Kate Down (KD), Lynette Hopkins (LH), Stephen Hopkins (SH), George McLaren-Brown (GMB), Adriana Roscoe (AR) and Jean Stainthorpe (JS).

In attendance: Jackie Weaver (Cheshire Association of Local Councils)

PART A

Members of public in attendance: 5

23/53 Apologies for absence

Steve Elliott (SE) (Note: Ward Councillor Bailey had tendered her apology, but this had not been picked up.)

23/54 Public participation

It was requested that the Council increase the financial information available to the councillors and public by including a monthly report on actual expenditure against proposed year end out turn and budget. A further comment was made that it was good to see that more information is already being published but an update on the potential cash recovery would be valuable. The Council responded that the Police would not release information on current investigations so the Council did not have more information to give and if it did would be prohibited from divulging it for the moment.

A question was posed asking why permission for the BBQ had been refused. There were two factors firstly the change of date and secondly the issue of the outstanding retrospective planning application. The Council had been advised that it was inadvisable to hold events on the field until that issue had been resolved. The Council further advised with reference to the minutes that the decision had not been taken to refuse permission but to defer it pending investigation into the insurance position.

Concern was expressed at the continuing delay in repairs to Green Lane. The Council responded that this was clearly not being prioritised by Cheshire East Council however, CE has requested access to the field to check for the presence of newts prior to the work being undertaken. The access was granted and the areas were checked the road work was scheduled for August but has not yet taken place.

Concern was expressed that there had been no engagement by the Council with the community on the issue of car park charging. The Council advised that it had agreed to hold a village meeting and to include the Ward Councillor in that meeting. Furthermore the public consultation on this began on the 6th September. The Council encouraged the public to attend this meeting so that their views could be taken into account.

23/55 Declarations of Interest

APC Minutes Full Council meeting 6.9.23

AR declared an interest in Agenda Item 23/49i as a consequence of the appointed Planning Consultant being an acquaintance.

23/56 Requests for Dispensation

None

23/57 Confirmation of Minutes

23/57(i) Full Council Meeting 10th July 2023

The minutes were agreed as a correct record

23/57(ii) Emergency Meeting 31st July 2023

The minutes were agreed subject to 23/60 being amended from 'Clerk to meet costs of scaled drawings ...' to read 'Clerk to *bring back* costs of scaled drawings...'

23/57(iii) Emergency Meeting 23rd August 2023

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

All in favour

23/58 Election of Vice-Chair

Following a brief discussion it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Kate Down be appointed Vice-Chair.
Proposed AP Seconded JS 3 votes in favour 2 abstentions

23/59 Planning Matters

23/59(i) There were no planning applications received.

23/59(ii) The Council considered the proposed Change of Use application for the existing flat by the Audlem Public Hall Management Committee. The Committee representative stated that they had been advised it would not be viable as a commercial property and the proposal would be to make it part of the body of the Hall which may be used for storage or as a cleaning hub. It would attract Council Tax as an empty dwelling which would put a further strain on the finances. The APHMC were keen to consult with the Parish Council on this matter.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council was supportive of the proposed change.

23/59(iii) The Council **NOTED** the following update on CE Planning Decisions:

- 23/2223N: 8 Copthorne Drive - side extension over existing garage - approved- APC had no objection
- 23/2064N: Bunsley Bank Farm - change if use of barn to provide 5 bedroom dwelling- refused- APC had no objection
- 23/2477W: Land off Rose Cottage, Green Lane - Prior Approval: Excavation/Deposit waste for agriculture – Refused APC not consulted

23/59(iv) GS gave a brief update on the progress of the Retrospective Planning Application for a change of use for Turnpike Field. He said there had been a slight delay as the plans had needed some minor amendments but they should be submitted to CE by the 8th September 2023. Members **NOTED** the update.

23/59(v) The Council considered a report on the condition of a number of trees and hedges around the Conservation Area. GMB reminded the Council of the necessity of maintaining an access for the Fire Brigade through the area. The representative of ADAS indicated the committee was willing to pay a maximum of £400 for the tree surgeon but any additional cost would have to go back to the committee for further consideration.

Members **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the appointment of the Tree Surgeon as requested and further **AGREED** that approval be given to use Council funds up to 10% more if that would facilitate the work being done in a timely fashion.

23/60 Financial Matters

Members noted that GS and SH had worked hard on producing a detailed report for the Council and that they would continue to make as much financial information available as possible.

23/60(i) Members were asked to approve additional hours and expenses for the previous clerk during the handover period.

Members **APPROVED** expenses of **£103.65** and additional hours of **£137.86** being paid.

23/60(ii) Members were asked to approve the following payment schedule:

Date	Supplier	Goods/Service	Amount (£)
31.08.23	Katrina Chalk	Salary and expenses	241.51
31.08.23	Michael Dolan	Lengthsman's duties	520.00
03.08.23	3 Counties Cleaning	Toilet cleaning - July	420.00
31.07.23	Audlem Methodist Church	Hire of Hall -31.07.23	40.00
01.08.23	ThenMedia	Website	54.00
30.05.23	SLCC	Locum Clerk – April 2023	229.81
28.08.23	Audlem Methodist Church	Hire of Hall – 23.08.23	40.00
26.06.23	Audlem Printers	Signs for Turnpike Field	209.00
30.03.23	3 Counties Cleaning	Toilet cleaning - August	420.00
24.07.23	EDF Energy (Direct Debit)	Electricity - Toilets	30.30
28.07.23	The Planning Studio	Planning Services - Turnpike	1295.00
03.08.23	EDF Energy (Direct Debit)	Electricity - Toilets	8.26

Members **APPROVED** the payment schedule authorising the payment of £1295.00 to the Planning Studio when the planning application has been submitted.

23/60(iii) Members were asked to approve the following payments already made as a matter of urgency:

Date	Supplier	Goods/Service	Amount (£)
05.07.23	PWLB	Loan Repayment	5,231.83
18.07.23	BHIB	Insurance	4,127.28

Members **APPROVED** the payments retrospectively.

23/60(iv) Members were asked to **NOTE** the income and expenditure statement as at 31st August 2023. The total spend to date was £75,705 and the remaining balance was £55k. There is also a £20k reserve. The current bank balance is £27,975.20. Members **AGREED** that this information could be published prior to the meetings for further transparency.

[NOTE: Please see addendum at end of these minutes]

23/61 Communication Group

JS addressed the meeting and stressed the importance of communication with the community and sought to increase the speed at which information could be released.

It was **AGREED** that general village information would be produced and circulated by SE, JS, SH and GS and that the minutes would be available on the website faster than previously achieved.

23/62 Turnpike Field

23/62(i) Members discussed the requirement for a tree condition and risk assessment report and considered the three quotes received.

It was **AGREED** that the Council would appoint Company A

23/62(ii) Members discussed the requirement for approval for obtaining quotations for the recommended work following the inspections.

It was **AGREED** that quotations for subsequent work should be obtained as soon as possible.

23/62(iii) Members were further asked to consider the early removal of a tree near the brook which the tree surgeon had also expressed severe concerns about.

Given that the tree was on Council land and was in a dangerous condition it was **AGREED** that the work be commissioned under delegated powers by the acting clerks.

JS also reported on the disappointing amount of vandalism that was being experienced with vandalism of the benches and dog excrement being smeared on the seats. The PCSO had advised that these incidents should be reported to the police and AR had subsequently report 3 incidents on the police website. There is also an issue with lifebelts being removed albeit that they are later recovered.

The Public Hall Management Committee has stated they wish to site a bench on the field but they will wait until the outstanding issue of planning permission has been resolved.

The Autumn maintenance plan has now been agreed. LH drew attention to an area at the bottom of the field which is rampant with weeds including ragwort. The comments were noted.

23/63 Staffing Committee

AR advised that the vacancy had been advertised and to date 2 responses had been received. The closing date is the 24th September 2023.

23/64 Village Management (VMG)

23/64(i) The Council was invited to note the report of the Group that had been previously circulated. It was noted that the fencing appeared to have disappeared from Longhill Moss and is a concern, also that invoices needed to be sent to the Tenants but to date no formal agreements could be found and the archives would need to be explored.

Councillors noted the concerns over the lack of white lines in Cheshire Street and with regard to speeding LH had approached CE who were unfortunately unable to provide a spare SID.

The Council was encouraged to support the remembrance figures initiative and perhaps individuals and businesses in the village might be willing to help fund this.

The informal bike track is causing concern as there is a safety issue with the footpaths. Members discussed this at length, but since the land belongs to CE it was felt that this was something that they needed to resolve and that the parish council could have little impact on this.

With regard to the toilets it was asked when the honesty box was last 'banked'. GS said it was July and there had been £85 in the coffers. He offered to empty the box again on behalf of the Council.

The public had expressed an interest in attending these meetings but as they are held in private residences this was a problem. The Group is considering holding their meetings in the small room at the Chapel.

The council also **RESOLVED** to set the date of the 2024 Annual Meeting which will be **22nd May 2024**.

23/65 Office Matters

23/65(i) Members were asked to **NOTE** that from now on meetings would be recorded.

23/65(ii) Following the recent resignation it was noted that CE would be notified of the further vacancy.

23/66 **Co-option of Councillors**

Members considered the two applications received and after some deliberation it was **AGREED** that K Nord be co-opted onto Audlem Parish Council.

The acting clerks will write to the unsuccessful applicant thanking them for their application and explaining the Council's decision that they could not support the application at this moment due to the on-going police investigation, but that they hoped there would be a future opportunity to appoint.

23/67 **Date of Next Meeting and Items for Future Agenda**

The next meeting will be held on **Monday 9th October 2023** in the **Methodist Church, Shropshire St, Audlem, Crewe CW3 0AE.**

Exclusion of Public

At this point GS asked that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of an item pursuant to Section 100 (A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information. He thanked them for attending.

Time Meeting Closed 9.34pm

ADDENDUM

23/60(iv) The minutes reflect what was said at the meeting but the figures were mis-stated in error. The correct figures are set out below for information.

Members were asked to **NOTE** the income and expenditure statement as at 31st August 2023. The total spend to date was £20,698 and the remaining balance was £75k. Total income was £75,705. There is also a £20k reserve.

PART B

23/68 Council discussed the offer of assistance by a resident to act as point of contact for the police with the Council for the on-going investigation.

It was **AGREED** that the resident be asked to undertake that role and that AR draft a Terms of Reference for the position so that both parties (and the constabulary) understand the extent of the position.

DRAFT