



AUDLEM
PARISH COUNCIL

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Chair: Derek Winskill
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Minutes of meeting of Audlem Parish Council
held in the Methodist Church, Shropshire St. Audlem
on Monday 12th December 2022 at 7.00pm.

PART A

Present: Cllrs Derek Winskill [DW](Chair), Geoff Seddon [GS], Tim Lawton [TL], Jean Stainthorpe [JS] and Paul Cawood [PC]

Absent: Cllr J Bower. Council **NOTED** Cllr Bower's continued absence without apology.

In attendance: Dr Kate Howe (Locum Clerk), Rachel Bailey (Cheshire East Ward Councillor), Jackie Weaver (ChALC) - joined meeting at 8.05pm.

Members of the public (MOP): 8

22/94 Apologies for absence received from Cllrs. Ralph Warburton [RW] (Vice Chair)

22/95 Public Participation / Open Forum

MOP mentioned a Community Cash Back Fund from Police available for road safety issues relevant for Turnpike Field. JS (Chair of TFWG) thanked MOP for alerting APC and agreed to investigate. If applicable TFWG will action.

22/96 Declarations of Interest – there were none

22/97 Requests for Dispensations – there were none

22/98 Confirmation of Minutes

Council **NOTED** typo at Item 22/89 point 3) change to 'Swanbach'
With this minor amendment GS proposed / JS seconded, (TL abstained due to absence) Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on **14th November 2022.**

22/99 Co-option of new councillors

Due to weighty agenda and 4 candidates to interview, Council **RESOLVED** to move this item to end of meeting.

22/100 Planning Matters

No new planning applications reported since last meeting

Council **NOTED** Chair of Planning Group's update on current applications:

- **21/5453N** Spout Farm, Longhill Lane - Proposed rear extensions, internal remodelling, and external reconfiguration. Approved following amended plans.
- **22/3467N** 3 Holly Bank - Demolition of existing conservatory to allow single story rear extension. Approved.
- **22/3491N** Kynsal Cottage, Paddock Lane – Single storey side and rear extension and replacement garage. Approved
- **22/0909N** 4 Witton Close – Front porch and rear ground and first floor extensions. Approved

22/101 Financial Matters

22.101(a) Council considered new appointment and elected Jean Stainthorpe. TL proposed, GS seconded, Council **RESOLVED** to appoint JS as new member of Finance Committee.

22.101(b) TL proposed, DW seconded, Council **RESOLVED** retrospective approval of payments made (via ChALC) from November 11th to 9th December 2022 (as schedule circulated) authorised by the Clerk using delegated authorities (since November meeting) due to urgent business need.

22.101(c) GS proposed, DW seconded, Council **RESOLVED** to suspend the grant programme for 2022-23 and forthcoming programme for 2023-24 due to financial challenges.

22.101(d) GS (Vice-Chair of Finance Committee) gave explanation of original and revised budget for 2022-23. Impact of Locum Clerk agency costs, dramatic increase in insurance cost totalling £19k increase in budgeted costs. GS proposed, TL seconded, Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the draft budget (identifying budget savings and accurate budget projections for remaining financial year as recommended by Finance Committee (December 2022 to end March 2023)).

22.101(e) GS (Vice-Chair of Finance Committee) explained how draft budget for 2023-24 had been produced. All APC bills currently being paid by ChALC due to lack of APC funds. APC need to repay CHALC for payments made on behalf of APC. Due to 'apparently fraudulent' transactions enacted on APC bank account, APC now has no reserve and needs to ensure it can cover essential pre-committed contractual payments including loan on Turnpike Field. Hence, £129k needs to be raised to cover costs plus inflation. Precept request has not increased for 3 years. £22k expenditure was expected to be supported by reserves in 2022-23. Council considered the draft budget 2023/24 evidencing need for precept request increase of 130% as recommended by Finance Committee. Council **NOTED** that if/when any money compensated to APC from 'apparently fraudulent' transactions, APC will address this in future years precept request. GS proposed, TL seconded, Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the 2023-24 budget as recommended by Finance Committee.

22.101(f) Council considered the estimated precept as recommended by the Finance Committee based on the draft budget 2023/24. GS proposed, DW seconded, Council **RESOLVED** to approve.

22.101(g) GS (Vice-Chair of Finance Committee) explained VAT reclaims being made will help with cashflow and payment from HMRC will be requested to go direct to CHALC to offset costs owing:

- APC are making VAT reclamation claim of £1,900 for 2021-22.
- APC estimating VAT reclamation claim of £7k for 2022-23 current year.

Council **NOTED** actions being taken on reclamation of VAT.

22.101(h) GS (Vice-Chair of Finance Committee) explained last week APC wanted to get urgent statement out to public. This was impeded by current approved Scheme of Delegation. GS proposed, TL seconded, Council **RESOLVED** to approve Amendment to the Scheme of Delegation for Communications Group. *Articles shall be sent to all councillors prior to publication. Should any councillor object it will be held in abeyance until agreed. Approval of urgent Public Statements will be by delegated authority of Clerk (and APC Chair or Chair of Communications Group).*

22/102 Communications Group

Council **NOTED** the release of two public statements:

- a) Re-opening of Public Toilets
- b) Moving On

22/103 Staffing Matters

Council **NOTED** report from Vice-Chair of Staffing Committee on progress:

(a) Lengthsman - Job Description (slightly amended), and new contract now supplied to Lengthsman. Finalised documents will be supplied electronically to Locum Clerk for filing.

(b) Recruitment of Permanent Parish Clerk – only one application received. Current applicant has short term experience in small Parish Council. Councillors **NOTED** they would not recommend interviewing only ONE applicant for the post. TL advised he was aware of a further applicant who may be interested but had not yet applied for the post. Locum Clerk and Rachel Bailey advised Council they could not consider any applicants after closing date. PC proposed, DW seconded, Council **RESOLVED** to re-run advert with new closing date of 6th January 2023 and hope to receive additional qualified, experienced applicants to consider. GS to contact current applicant and explain they are still in consideration for the post pending re-advertisement.

22/104 Turnpike Field

Chair of Turnpike Field Working Group gave verbal update on meeting held on 5th December.

Vacancy for Community member. Nigel Mottershead had been proposed and accepted. GS proposed, TL seconded Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Nigel Mottershead as new community member of TFWG.

22/105 Village Management

a) Due to resignation of Chair of Village Management Group and proposed co-option of new Councillors, GS proposed, TL seconded, and Council **RESOLVED**

to postpone appointment of one additional member and appointment of new Chair of Village Management Group to January meeting.

b) Council **NOTED** verbal updates on:

- Public toilets - due to vandalism toilets were briefly closed for repair, repair and replacement work was completed at no cost to the Council by contractor FOC (thanks to Pete Ellison very generous member of village) and re-opened in time for village events, potential insurance claim for damage was subsequently withdrawn, negating loss of no claims.
- Cotton Mews Tree Survey – Peter Morgan (Tree Warden) recommended APC support resident's complaint to Cheshire East to prevent damage and costs escalating (resident to bear cost of tree works).
- Bellyse Monument – APC Chair advised he had received quote of £2,500 to sandblast monument. Locum Clerk advised monument is listed Grade II monument and no work can be done without consent. Also, any proposed works would require 3 quotations from qualified and experienced contractors, method statements and risk assessments. Locum Clerk advised there may be funding available for required work to historic monuments. Rachel Bailey concurred.
- Flooding at Corbrook and Swanbach – DW advised he had spoken to CE Highways re. temporary roadworks. Ref. no. 3450743 (Corbrook), Ref. no. 3450735 (Swanbach). Phone no. for CE Highways is 0300 123 5021 if residents wish to contact them direct.
- Action on Audlem Highways. Chair proposed Locum Clerk should write to CE Highways complaining that A529 road surface was breaking up.

c) Audlem Highways

PC had asked for item to be included. He was concerned the issues impacting were not all separate due to joined up nature of locations of impact on residents. These are all collective issues daily impacting residents and local community travelling through Audlem. Current Chair of Highways is keen on 'top up' pilot. Put forward each year for funding but do not get included. This is significant ongoing issue not being addressed. Costs keep impacting on revenue budget and keep escalating.

d) Council **NOTED** thanks to all volunteers involved with Christmas Lights which again had done Audlem a proud service.

22/106 Police Update

No report supplied – no Police or Community Support Officer available

22/107 Report by Ward Councillor

- Audlem Appearance- Rachel Bailey commented that Audlem Village 'looked fantastic' and this was all due to the volunteers and community efforts working together.
- Highways – Rachel had meeting with 4 CE Highways officers and 2 flood officers re. old Railway Bridge trying to find way to expedite. CE now going back to Network Rail to ascertain if any financial assistance available. Rachel highlighted cost impact on Highways revenue budget of temporary closures and H&S impacts, noting this budget expenditure could be used for permanent repairs. Rachel is writing to CE articulating the additional revenue impact.
- Closure of Coole Lane for repair to bridge damaged by frost. Rachel noted this would impact Green Lane with potential road closures.

- Corbrook – response received determined a larger gully was required.
- Audlem Road - Rachel identified with Highways Officer an area for a crossing with studded paving.
- Village Map – walking route by Shroppie not clear. Need plan to renew it. Currently sticky label added keeps being removed. Council identified as item for future agenda.
- Local Plan – there is an assumption of ‘windfall’ sites. This is more challenging for Audlem. Rachel advised APC ensure their Neighbourhood Plan is aligned with CE Plan.

22/108 Office Matters

Verbal update from Locum Clerk confirmed:

- insurers had been notified of ‘apparently fraudulent’ transactions on APC account and potential claim.
- Financial Ombudsman Service had been advised of claim against Santander Bank

22/109 Items for Future Agenda

None notified

22/110 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at **7pm on Monday 9th January 2023** in the Methodist Church, Shropshire St, Audlem, Crewe CW3 0AE

PART B

22/99 Councillor Co-option Interviews

5 applications for co-option had been received and circulated to all councillors.

In meeting, Council interviewed 4 candidates for co-option:

- Kate Down
- Steve Elliot
- Chris May
- Adrianna Roscoe
- William Fell – had withdrawn.

GS (Vice Chair – Finance Committee) gave opening statement to provide transparency to all applicants of issues impacting Audlem PC. All 4 candidates were asked the same questions, responses logged and discussed by Council following interview. Following consideration Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to invite all 4 candidates to become APC councillors for a short term until Council are re-elected in May 2023.

Locum Clerk to contact candidates to invite them to join APC as councillors. On confirmation of acceptance, Locum Clerk to arrange for APC email set up, supply induction pack and Register of Members Interest Forms. Council **NOTED** that on confirmation of acceptance new APC councillor names would be confirmed in APC public statement.

22/111 Councillor Disqualification – Council **NOTED** Locum Clerk’s advice that a member of council can lose their place on the council by failure to attend meetings. A councillor ceases to be a member of the council if they fail over a period of six consecutive months, from the date of their last attendance, to attend any meeting of

the council unless absence was duly approved by the council (LGA, 1972, s. 85(1) and (2)). On this basis Council **RESOLVED** to immediately disqualify John Bower as a councillor for Audlem Parish Council. Locum Clerk to write to John Bower and notify him of their decision.

Chair thanked Councillors for their support and attendance wishing all seasonal goodwill. **Meeting closed 9.50pm.**

