



**AUDLEM**  
PARISH COUNCIL

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**Clerk: Carol Bell**

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### **Minutes of meeting of Audlem Parish Council held in the Methodist Church, Shropshire St. Audlem on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May at 7.00pm.**

Present: Councillors Geoff Seddon (GS) (Chair), Stephen Hopkins (SH), Lynette Hopkins (LH) Steve Elliott (SE), Kate Down (KD), George McLaren-Brown (GMB), Keith Nord (KN)

In attendance: Carol Bell (Clerk to APC) Rachel Bailey (Ward Councillor)

#### **Part A**

GS opened the meeting at 7 pm and advised that the meeting was being recorded.

Members of public in attendance: 17

#### **24/1 Election of the Chair**

GS re-elected as Chair. SE proposed GS and KD seconded. 3 against.. Declaration of Acceptance of Office completed.

#### **24/2 Election of Vice-chair**

SH elected as Vice-chair. GS proposed, SE seconded, All in favour. Declaration of Office completed.

#### **24/3 Apologies for absence**

No apologies

#### **24/4 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest given

#### **24/5 Requests for Dispensation**

No requests for dispensation given

#### **24/6 Co-option of Councillors**

Applications for the post of Councillor were received from six Nick Brennan, Carl Dovey, Ryan Jones, Martyn Measures, Andrew Quinlan and Zac Andrews. Present at the meeting were Nick Brennan, Carl Dovey, Ryan Jones and Martyn Measures. GS invited the applicants to give a brief talk on why they wished to join the Parish Council and were asked a series of questions by the current Members. Voting then took place for all applicants by means of a voting slip. Following two rounds of voting, Nick Brennan, Carl Dovey and Ryan Jones were co-opted. GS thanked all applicants for their interest.

#### **24/7 Public Participation**

A MOP asked why the information from the extraordinary meeting held by the Council on 16<sup>th</sup> April regarding Turnpike Field was not on tonight's agenda and also how many hundreds of pounds have been spent on the field? GS replied in 2018 when the field was purchased the Council should have applied for change of use, it didn't and change of use only became an issue when the gate entrance to the field was changed and a planning officer from Cheshire East came out and advised that planning permission needed to be sought. In relation to the legal advice sought, the Council were hoping they could bring the results to this meeting but the case is still on going, hence the reason for this going into Part B this evening. Once the Council has a clear way forward from the solicitor the Council will let the residents know.

A MOP asked how long would the solicitor involvement last?

GS replied hopefully fairly quickly.

A MOP asked if there was any progression on the alleged fraud of parish money?

The Clerk replied that a complaint letter has been sent to the Chief Commissioner of Crime that had been acknowledged by John Dwyer and had been sent on to the Chief Constable and the Council were awaiting a response.

A MOP asked if there is any litigation involved with Turnpike Field?  
GS advised that possibly there may be litigation.

A MOP asked when Cllr Seddon would respond to their e-mail regarding his questions on the precept?  
GS replied that he would be responding.

A MOP asked the Clerk if she will be responding to their e-mail regarding their query on the electricity consumption in the toilets?  
The Clerk replied that she will be responding in due course.

#### **24/8 Confirmation of minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April were **APPROVED** as a correct record subject to the following amendments

Minute 23/183, seventh question, addition added to the end of that question to read ' Cllr Bailey commented based on her past experience.'

Minute 23/192 – addition at the end of the report to read ' an inllr Bailey asked why the planning application 24/1255N was not on the agenda. KD advised that this application was discussed in the March meeting. Proposed SH, seconded KD, all in favour

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April were **APPROVED** as a correct record  
Proposed SE, seconded GS, 4 in favour, abstention KN

#### **24/9 To REVIEW and AGREE membership of Council Committees and working groups**

The Council **AGREED** to defer this decision until the next APC meeting by which time the newly adopted Members of the Council would be in office

#### **24/10 To REVIEW representatives on external bodies and vacancies**

The Council **AGREED** to defer this decision until the next APC meeting by which time the newly adopted Members of the Council would be in office

#### **24/11 To REVIEW and ADOPT the latest version of**

Standing Orders  
Financial regulations

The Council **AGREED** to defer to the next meeting

#### **24/12 To REVIEW**

Terms of reference Turnpike Field Working Group  
Terms of reference Village Management Committee  
Terms of reference Communications Group  
Terms of reference Staffing Committee  
Terms of reference Planning Group  
Terms of reference Finance Committee

The Council **AGREED** to defer to the next meeting

#### **24/13 To REVIEW the following policies**

Communications Policy (2020)  
Buttermarket Usage Policy (2023)  
Health & Safety Policy (2020)  
Code of Conduct (2019)  
Grant Application (2019)  
Discipline & Grievance Policy (2019)  
Staff Sickness Policy (2019)  
CCTV Policy (2020)  
Equal Opportunities Policy (2020)  
Complaints Policy (2020)  
Risk Assessment Policy (2019)

The Council **AGREED** to defer to the next meeting

#### **24/14 Planning matters**

Councillors considered the following planning applications

Cllr Bailey, Cllr Lynette Hopkins and Cllr Stephen Hopkins declared an interest in the following application and left the room. KD apologised to Cllr Bailey for an error regarding minute 23/192 from the Audlem Parish Council April meeting in relation to the below application. KD advised she mistakenly thought the planning application had been addressed in the March meeting due to confusing the planning number with another.

- 24/14 (i) **24/1255N** Parcel of agricultural land opposite Swanbach Grange, Green Lane, Audlem - Two agricultural buildings to store forage and machinery, along with an associated access track. APC **OBJECTED** – application refused

Cllr Bailey, Cllr Lynette Hopkins and Cllr Stephen Hopkins rejoined the room at this point.

- 24/14 (ii) **24/1239N** Pheasants Rise, Damson Lane, Cox Bank – proposed bungalow. APC **OBJECTED**– application refused
- 24/14 (iii) **24/1293T** 38 Salford, Audlem – works to trees in conservation area – APC no objection
- 24/14 (iv) **24/1124N** 15 – 17, Stafford Street, Audlem – conversion of existing building into a granny annexe – APC no objection

Proposed KH, seconded SH, all in favour

Councillors **NOTED** the following decision.

- 24/14 (v) 24/0250T Turnpike Field, Green Lane, Audlem – Works to trees T4, T5, T10 and T32 – consent given by CE with conditions

#### **24/15 Financial Matters**

24/15 (i) Councillors **NOTED** the CIL report for 2023/2024

24/15 (ii) SH advised the Asset register would be reviewed in the Finance meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> May. SH asked Councillors to **NOTE** that the value of the assets could not be increased on the register but could be increased for insurance purposes.

24/15 (iii) Councillors **NOTED** the audit for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. SH read out the actions that need to be undertaken.

24/15 (iv) Councillors **APPROVED** the completion of the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

Proposed SH, Seconded SE, all in favour

24/15 (v) To **CONSIDER** and **APPROVE** the Accounting Statements (section 2) for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

Proposed SH, Seconded, KD all in favour

24/15 (vi) Councillors agreed to defer the approval date for the advertising for the exercise of public rights to the Finance meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> May

24/15 (vii) Councillors **DETERMINED** that they would retain the same auditor as this year for 2024/2025 accounts  
Proposed SH, Seconded GS all in favour

24/15 (viii) Councillors **NOTED** that in accordance with section 151 of the 1972 Act, the Parish Clerk is appointed as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer for the Council as part of her contract of employment.

24/15 (ix) Councillors **RECONFIRMED** that, in accordance with financial regulations 6.9 and its acceptance of BACS for the settlement of its invoices/requests for payment, provided that such payments are authorised by two bank signatories, and the evidence of such authorisation is retained, and any payments reported to the Parish Council have been made.

24/15 (x) Councillors **NOTED** the income and expenditure statement as of the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024

24/15 (xi) Councillors **APPROVED** the payment schedule below

Invoice Date	Supplier	Goods/Services	Amount (£)
16.04.2024	Audlem Methodist Church	Room hire for APC 16.04.24	25.00
18.04.2024	GiffGaff	Clerk's mobile phone	10.00
30.04.2024	Freeths Solicitors	Legal advice on contract for Turnpike Field	2,021.00 + VAT (404.80)
01.05.2024	Then Media	Website and e-mail supplier	39.00 + VAT (7.80)
13.05.2024	Audlem Methodist Church	Room hire for TFWG 29.04.24 Room hire for APC 13.05.24	25.00 40.00

Proposed SH, Seconded GS, all in favour

24/15 (xii) Councillors **APPROVED** retrospective payments below

Invoice Date	Supplier	Goods/Services	Amount (£)
16.04.2024	Audlem Methodist Church	Room hire for APC 16.04.24	25.00
18.04.2024	GiffGaff	Clerk's mobile phone	10.00
30.04.2024	Freeths Solicitors	Legal advice on contract for Turnpike Field	2,021.00 + VAT (404.80)
01.05.2024	Then Media	Website and e-mail supplier	39.00 + VAT (7.80)
13.05.2024	Audlem Methodist Church	Room hire for TFWG 29.04.24 Room hire for APC 13.05.24	25.00 40.00

Proposed SH, Seconded GS, all in favour

24/15 (xiii) Councillors **NOTED** income received

Invoice Date	Supplier	Goods/Services	Amount
04.04.2024	Cheshire East	Precept	39,080.00
07.05.2024	Cheshire East	Community Infrastructure Levy	1674.74

### 23/16 Correspondence

24/16 (i) As previously advised by the Clerk, acknowledgement had been received from John Dwyer Chief Commissioner of Crime in response to the complaint letter sent

### 24/17 Turnpike Field

24/17 (i) SE gave an update from the TFWG meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024. SE advised that work could now begin on the TPO trees on Turnpike Field as planning had been approved. SE advised that Cheshire Wildlife Trust had been out and surveyed the ponds and taken water samples and will come back with the results of that survey. SE advised that TFWG were trying to arrange a volunteer group to help get rid of the Himalayan Balsam that is now rampant on parts of the field.

24/17 (ii) SE asked for approval from Council for a sub-group to restart the car park project on Turnpike Field. Approval was given to investigate costs and procedures on the premise that all findings are reported back to full council

24/17 (iii) Councillors **APPROVED** that Tony Seabridge would continue to be the contractor for cutting the grass for the coming year provided invoices were issued on time and a clear explanation of work undertaken was provided.

Proposed GS, Seconded SH, all in favour

24/17 (iv) The Weed Spraying Risk Assessment Document and associated spraying record was not reviewed

24/17 (v) Councillors **DISCUSSED** the spraying of the brambles/Himalayan Balsam/ragwort in Turnpike Field. SE stated that due to the impact of using weedkiller on the field he would like to suggest that the field is not sprayed this year but flailed more regularly. GMB advised that if the ragwort on the field is flailed then the seeds would spread and regerminate and cause the ragwort to spread. LH stated that it could be contained by regularly pulling up of the roots but needs to be kept on top of and unfortunately it has been left and has now got out of hand. There were discussions around the ragwort killing horses if left to grow and die back. RB stated that in view of what she has heard she wanted to declare the usual interest that SM Dairy Farms have a grazing licence for the adjacent field. RB stated that the ragwort from Turnpike has spread previously and she is giving notice as Audlem Parish Council are charged for caring for that field. RB advised that previous minutes for Turnpike stated advice given from a retired vet was that sheep grazing gets rid of ragwort naturally due to the closeness of their grazing. RB also stated that when Turnpike Field was purchased there was a projected income from sale of crops and it is important that residents of the village note that not only has this source of income been lost but that they also need to be aware of the projected costs will be.

#### **24/18 Village Management Committee (VMC)**

24/18 (i) LH provided an update on the meeting with Richard Hibbert from Cheshire East regarding the proposed car parking charges. LH stated that CE have advised there is the potential to buy or lease the car park and further information from CE about this should be forthcoming in the next couple of weeks.

24/18 (ii) Councillors **AGREED** a budget of £250 for the Annual Village Meeting

24/18 (iii) Councillors agreed that the provision of more cycle racks would be discussed in the next Village Management Committee meeting

24/18 (iv) Councillors **NOTED** the April Crime data for Audlem

#### **24/19 Report by Ward councillor**

RB stated that there are a series of consultations currently under way in Cheshire East . One of the consultations is to review the local bus services. RB asked APC to respond to the consultation even though proposed changes to services do not affect Audlem but do affect outlying areas. RB stated that the Go-Too rural bus service which is currently specific to this area and South Cheshire will be lost due to the service becoming generic across South Cheshire. RB stated that this will undoubtedly have an impact on any residents outside of the village who do not drive and use the bus as their means of transport and that the village of Audlem may also be impacted as these residents will no longer be able to come into Audlem and use the facilities of the village. RB expressed her disappointment that the consultation was not on the evening's agenda.

RB asked for the support of the Council to assist in getting a safe crossing point on Cheshire Street and the possible use of some of the CIL money to obtain that.

RB advised that previous data she had collected and supplied to CE did not support a pelican crossing so the alternative would be a marked crossing point with studs. RB advised she had had a number of meetings with Highways regarding this which she thought was going to produce a favourable result but a query had been raised by one of the Highway officers over the provision of the crossing and she was waiting for him to get back to her with a possible solution.

RB mentioned other CE consultations that should be considered for a response which were Air Quality Strategy, Carbon Neutrality Action Plan, closure of household waste recycling centres and a future consultation on the potential closure of some children's centres.

RB ended on a positive note stating that she had confidence that the new Chief Executive of CE had the experience and political independence to deliver what is needed.

#### **24/20 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on **Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024** at 7.00 pm in the **Methodist Church, Shropshire Street, Audlem, CW3 0AE.**

#### **Exclusion of Public**

At this point the Chair 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.

The Chair closed the meeting at 21.07 p.m., thanking everyone for their attendance.

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#### **PART B**

**24/21** Councillors discussed recent legal advice received in relation to the signed contract on Turnpiked Field and **AGREED** the next steps