



AUDLEM
PARISH COUNCIL

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**Minutes of meeting of Audlem Parish Council
held in the Methodist Church, Shropshire St. Audlem
on Monday 9th October at 7.00pm.**

Present: Steve Elliott (SE), Lynette Hopkins (LH), Stephen Hopkins (SH), George McLaren-Brown (GMB), Keith Nord (KN), Adriana Roscoe (AR), Geoff Seddon (GS) and Jean Stainthorpe (JS).

In attendance: Cllr Rachel Bailey (Ward Councillor), Carol Bell and Jackie Weaver (JW) (Cheshire Association of Local Councils)

Members of public in attendance: 8

GS welcomed KN as a newly co-opted Councillor and confirmed that he had properly signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and was therefore participating in the meeting.

GS reminded those present that the meeting was being recorded

23/85 Apologies for absence

Kate Down (KD)

23/86 Public participation

The issue of Green Lane traffic lights was highlighted again with frustration expressed that it had still not been addressed even after 18 months. JS stated that Cheshire East Council had surveyed the field for great crested newts and that the work had been planned for August. Cllr Bailey added that access was also needed from adjacent landowners and that that was still outstanding. There had been two surveys of the stream done and there was concern about the fish which was also holding up the works.

LH added that she had met with the Highways Safety Officer this day but no progress had been made and a report from the Environment Agency was still awaited.

It was **AGREED** that the parish council would write to the Environment Agency to get a more comprehensive understanding of the current situation and issues that needed to be resolved before the work could take place.

A request for an update on the fraud investigation was made and although GS had been in touch with the police three times to try to move this forward he had had no response. Cllr Bailey added that the police would only engage with a designated person and that person needed to be a statutory position or officer of the council (for example the clerk). GS stated that the appointment of a clerk would be confirmed later in the meeting.

23/87 Declarations of Interest

AR declared an interest in Agenda Item 23/91iii as a consequence of the appointed Planning Consultant being an acquaintance.

23/88 Requests for Dispensation

None

23/89 Report from Ward Councillor Rachel Bailey

Cllr Bailey reported that works around Corbrook were now being dealt with by a new team and that a second sink hole had appeared. However, progress was being made there and at the Old Railway Bridge.

Members thanked Cllr Bailey for her report as she excused herself from the meeting for half an hour.

23/90 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 6th September 2023 were **AGREED** as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- i) Geoff Seddon was present;
- ii) 23/74 the initials should be AR not AP
- iii) 23/70 (3rd para, final sentence) after '... areas were checked' add and vegetation trimmed. The ...'
- iv) 23/77 to read 'produced and circulated to the Comms Group plus SH'.
- v) 23/80 Add new para. 'A Public Transport consultation about bus services is currently being conducted by Cheshire East. Parish Councillors have responded and urged members of the public to do so before the consultation ends on 30 September.'

Proposed by SH Seconded JS

23/91 Appointment of Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

AR stated that the interviews had taken place the previous week and the recommendation to Council was that the appointment should be Mrs Carol Bell.

It was **AGREED** that Mrs Bell be appointed subject to satisfactory references and with a start date to be agreed between the parties.

Proposed by AR Seconded by SE

23/92 Planning Matters

23.92 i GS invited members to note the three planning applications considered by the Planning Group as set out below.

- 23/3035: Bradwood, Bagley Lane – Single storey extension
- 23/3447: Audlem Public Hall – Change of use of former caretaker's flat
- 23/3532: Spring Morn, Copthorne Drive – Single storey extension

Given that these were minor extensions and the Audlem Public Hall application had been discussed at last month's meeting it was proposed that the council made no objections to these applications.

It was **AGREED** that no objections would be raised with regard to the three applications.

Proposed by GS Seconded by SE

23/92 ii There were no Planning Decisions to report on for the period.

23/92 iii Update on Retrospective Planning Application, Turnpike Field

Progress is being made on the retrospective application with Highways, Ecology, and Environmental Health all raising no objections however the Environment Agency wants a report on a number of issues. The planning agent's view was that this was disappointing and

over zealous but he has contacts for people who would undertake the report with the cost being between £600 and £700. GS stated that the costs involved in the application so far have been £1450 and £259 for the Planning Portal fee.

23/93 **Financial Matters**

23/93 i SH introduced the financial report and assured members that the finance meeting had closely scrutinised the budget and there were no issues of concern to report. The meeting also discussed making more financial information available for the public and had posted additional information on the noticeboard. So far expenditure has been £25257 with a remaining balance of £106,003 which is less than the budgeted expenditure.

LH asked why the precept was being paid quarterly and GS responded that it was due to the financial difficulties the Council had had following the fraud and the risk assessment by Cheshire East Council.

JW invited members to note how helpful Cheshire East Council had been in assisting the Council to get back to the positive financial position it was currently in.

The finance meeting had also discussed the need for a Deposit Account now that the Council had some positive balances in the account. They also considered the value of an improved accounting system with a possible move to Scribe Lite.

The next finance meeting will look at drafting the forward Budget and will be reviewing Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.

GMB expressed concern at the valuations of assets for insurance purposes and stated he would put a paper together for consideration.

SE drew attention to the aspiration for the Turnpike Field Group to raise further funds for the field through crowd funding. The group want to keep these monies in a separate bank account.

GMB also mentioned that the toilet cleaning contract was up for review and there was a need to get a further 2 quotes.

It was **AGREED** that the Turnpike Field Group investigate crowd funding and report back to the Council.

Proposed by SE Seconded by GMB

23/93 ii Members were asked to approve the following payments:

Date	Supplier	Goods/Service	Amount (£)
30.09.23	Michael Dolan	Lengthsman's duties	520.00
01.09.23	ThenMedia	Website	54.00
01.10.23	ThenMedia	Website	54.00
30.09.23	Shires Accountants	Payroll Services	127.80
02.10.23	3 Counties Cleaning	Toilet cleaning - September	420.00
04.10.23	Audlem Methodist Church	Hire of Hall - 06.09.23	40.00
18.09.23	Water Plus (Direct Debit)	Water - Toilets	74.10
20.09.23	EDF Energy (Direct Debit)	Electricity - Toilets	41.71
04.10.23	Audlem Methodist Church	Hire of Hall - 04.09.23	25.00

The payments were **APPROVED** by the members present.

Proposed by SH Seconded by SE

23/93 iii Members were also asked to approve the following retrospective payment:

Date	Supplier	Goods/Service	Amount (£)
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12.09.23	XDW Wormald	Plans for Turnpike Field	450.00
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Retrospective payment as set out above was **APPROVED**.

23/94 Communications

SE reiterated the comments made under 'Finance' about crowd funding and also the proposal that the website should be improved for accessibility and social media. It was noted that AOL was an independent body and the Council had no control over what it would or would not publish.

23/95 Turnpike Field

23/95 i SE referred back to the crowd funding for specific projects for the Field and the Council agreed that the group can investigate further.

23/95 ii GS stated that the tree survey had been carried out today. This included the tree at Longhill Moss.

23/95 iii The proposal to finalise the Fields in Trust application was withdrawn.

23/96 Village Management (VMG)

23/96 i LH and GMB met with the Highways Road Safety Officer and undertook a village walkabout. The officer recognised the issues as important but was unable to assist. It was noted that the consultees on the Car Park charging consultation did not include Highways. It was suggested that this point should be made in the council's response. LH has contacted fire and police to try to get their support in keeping parking free of charge and noted that there is a village meeting coming up specifically to discuss the issue.

With regard to the Remembrance Soldiers since they need to be cemented in it was decided that it was probably too late to go ahead this year.

As for the Monument repair efforts had been made to try to contact the conservation officer but there has been no response so far.

The Bike Track referenced last month was being kept tidy by the youths using it but nevertheless the wide hole in the ground remains a potential danger to walkers. Members agreed with regret that this does need to be referred to the land owners Cheshire East Council.

GMB advised that some of the defibrillators in the village were not working. Currently a map was being designed showing their placement and that will come back to council for approval when it is completed. The council owns one which needs maintenance.

It was **AGREED** that the Council would write to all owners reminding them that regular maintenance was needed.

Proposed by LH Seconded GS

23/96 ii With regard to the toilet block GS stated that he had emptied the honesty box for the gents' toilet and would be banking £288.

23/96 iii GMB mentioned that the insurance certificate needed to be put up and that a shelf was needed in the storage area. The leaves and ivy also need clearing up at the back of the block.

23/96 iv SE stated that the Churchfields Conservation Area planning application has gone in but there was nothing further to report. The remedial tree work has been done on Turnpike Field and Longhill Moss.

23/97 Office Matters

23/97 i GS advised members that the Casual Vacancy has been advertised.

23/97 ii Upgrading of the council website was discussed. SE had inquired of the current provider about what that might look like and the ability to share files on line with no size limit, social media integration and bulk email facilitation were all advantages. The current website costs £20 per month and the upgrade would be £40. Members expressed concern as to whether the host could view personal emails and were advised by SH that they were password protected.

It was **AGREED** that the upgrade be further investigated.

23/98 Report by Ward Councillor

Cllr Bailey's report was given earlier in the meeting.

23/99 Date of Next Meeting and Items for Future Agenda

The next meeting will take place on Monday 13th November 2023 at 7.00 pm in the Methodist Church, Shropshire Street, Audlem, CW3 0AE.

The meeting closed at 8.47pm

DRAFT