



## AUDLEM PARISH COUNCIL

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### MEETING OF AUDLEM PARISH COUNCIL (APC) Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 7.00pm Audlem Village Hall

#### **A report received from the Chair of the preceding 12 months**

It's fair to say that the last 12 months have been like no other in Audlem PCs recent history. After years of stability with a group of experienced councillors at the helm, there are now many new faces, including me.

We have also had the added challenge of working with Covid-19 restrictions, resulting in meetings since last September being held virtually. This is the first time the new PC has met face to face and also the first time I've met some of my fellow councillors and clerk.

Virtual meetings have certainly served the purpose of ensuring that Council business has continued, but there has been an impact on good communication and progress in some areas.

In the main, Audlem PC has continued to fund and deliver services in the community. Unlike in many towns and villages across the country, the village toilets have been kept open, maintained and cleaned for residents and visitors alike.

Maintenance has been undertaken on Long Hill Lane Moss and the Parish Council was pleased to support the public hall with funds for a much-needed refurbishment, which we hope will benefit everyone in the community.

It's also been amazing to see the good work of village groups continuing to provide and deliver services, including ADAS and ADCA, both organisations the PC has been pleased to support and will continue to do so in the future.

However, there's no denying it, the loss of experience and continuity, and the COVID restrictions have had an impact. This has resulted in delays in the progress of certain 'flagship' projects such as the Turnpike Field car park and acquisition of the playing field and car park.

On a very positive note, the last few months have been about consolidation and organisation. Lead by our interim clerk, Paul Barton, a new financial package, Scribe, has been adopted and comprehensive reporting of the budget is available. We're starting the new financial year with a clear picture of our budget, managed by our new clerk, Owen (formal intro to come), supported with a training package by Paul.

Added to this is a new subcommittee structure for councillors that has seven focus areas.

We will be reaching out to the community to re-establish or set up working groups, to cement links with existing groups to progress improvement works, and aiming to get input from our councillors, all keen volunteers with broad and valued experience, wishing to support the community and get things done.

Looking to this financial year, as already mentioned the parish council is now set to move forward with the ongoing delivery of services, protecting and maintaining village assets, managing progress on existing projects, supporting community groups, and uncovering new areas of work.

The grant application scheme has reopened for this financial year and we hope to support a larger number of organisations with funding. We have set aside 10% of the annual budget for community grants.

We'll be looking to make progress on the Turnpike Field car park, but will do so with caution and in consultation with the community to ensure that funding is spent appropriately and with transparency.

We'll be revisiting the status of the deal with Cheshire East Council on the acquisition of the playing field and car park, proceeding with caution and improved knowledge on the reality of the running costs and maintenance. We'll be looking to our subcommittees to engage with the community on safety and planning.

We've only got to look at the state of our roads to question how we get the much-needed attention of Cheshire East Highways to invest in improvement works, and we'll be looking for support in this endeavour.

We must support our village businesses, and look at ways to enhance the spirit of the village and surrounding area. Audlem is known as a thriving and lively village with events taking place throughout the year. The global pandemic has impacted on this and we need to look at how we can bring the community together and bring out the best ideas and volunteers to continue to make Audlem a great place to live.

We're looking for support, we want to benefit from the experience we know exists in the village, and also welcome new ideas, volunteers and initiatives. Let's all work together to make 2021 a great year for Audlem.

Catherine Gresty  
Chairperson  
Audlem Parish Council