

AUDLEM PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
MONDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 7.30PM
METHODIST MEETING ROOMS, SHROPSHIRE STREET, AUDLEM

PRESENT:

Cllr Siddorns	Cllr Jones (Chair)	Cllr Johnson	Cllr Thompson
Cllr G Seddon	Cllr Hill	Cllr P Seddon	Cllr Parsons
Cllr Down	Cllr Consterdine		

Attending: Mrs K Dixon (Clerk), CEC Cllr Rachel Bailey (from item 16.54 onwards), Mr B Bugeja, Mr B Cartwright (AOL), Mr A Jones (AOL)

PUBLIC FORUM – Mr B Cartwright asked why the agenda and minutes had not been posted on the website sooner, Cllr Jones explained that as well as the Clerk being away and unwell over the summer period, she had suffered from laptop failure on the first replacement as well as the original.

Mr B Bugeja reported concerns with the Buttermarket, see 16.56.1

16.47 APOLOGIES

Cllr Christie and Cllr Higham, personal reasons.

16.48 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – Cllrs G Seddon, P Seddon, Jones and Parsons reconfirmed their declared interests in Planning Application 16/0725N.

16.49 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 18th July 2016, after 2 minor amendments (Mr P Lloyd listed as attending and the numbering within 16.36.4), were approved and signed as a correct record.

16.50 MATTERS ARISING

(i) It was agreed that the plaque for Mrs Stockton would be ordered by the next meeting. This is being co-ordinated by Cllr Hill.

(ii) Environmental Assessment – this is being prepared by Cheshire Wildlife Trust and it anticipated that the draft will be reviewed by local environmental groups.

(iii) The ASET grant will be revisited at the next meeting.

(iv) Children's playground – Cllr Thompson reported that the recently repaired softplay by the roundabout was gouged out and it looked like it had been done deliberately. It was agreed that the Clerk would report this to CEC as an urgent health and safety issue.

16.51 PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

51.1 Local Plan & Planning Appeals - At a recent ChALC meeting it was reported that the hearing has now resumed. The Inspector plans to be pragmatic and deal only with issues he had already raised. It was hoped that if all goes well the CELP will be adopted in March/April 2017.

51.2 s106 Update - ChALC recommends that Parish Councils should submit a s106 for every appropriate planning application. Councillors discussed concerns about the procedure and and were reassured by the information from ChALC that this did not indicate acceptance of the application.

51.3 Planning Applications

- (i) Councillors considered the application 16/4198N and resolved to raise no objection.
- (ii – iv) The latest committee dates for these applications were noted.
- (v) The poor state of repair of the property left vacant for access to the Heathfield Road site was discussed. It was agreed that the Clerk should write to Mr Hockenhull and ask for remedial action to be taken as soon as possible.
- (vi) – (ix) The decisions for the listed applications were noted.
- (x) Bird's Nest (16/3040N) _ Cllrs G Seddon and Hill will meet with Mr Paul Hurdus of CEC Highways regarding this application on 8th September.

(i) 16/4198N	The Mount, MILL LANE, AUDLEM, CW3 0AY	Erection of single story timber garage and carport. Demolish existing garage and landscape to garden	28/09/2016	To discuss & resolve
(ii) 16/3040N	Birds Nest, AUDLEM ROAD, AUDLEM, CW3 0HF	Proposed Housing Development on Land adjacent Birds Nest for 20 dwellings	28/07/2016	Decision Date 22.9.16
16/2146N	Rose Cottage, Damson Lane, Coxbank, Audlem. CW3 0EU	Conversion of existing detached garage/workshop to form a detached two bedroomed house and new garage/workshop	02/06/2016	Awaiting Decision
(iii) 16/1131N	Land at Little Heath, Audlem Road, Audlem CW3 0HE	Reserved Matters - APPEARANCE, LANDSCAPING, LAYOUT AND SCALE OF OUTLINE PERMISSION FOR UP TO 120 DWELLINGS	20/04/2016	Decision Date 28.9.16
(iv) 16/0725N	Land At, MOORSFIELD AVENUE, AUDLEM	Outline application for development for up to 87 dwellings, incorporating self-build plots, open space provision, landscaping and access	21/04/2016	Decision Date 21.9.16
(vi) 16/2850N	COBB COTTAGE, MONKS LANE, AUDLEM, CW3 0HP	Amendment to previously approved application 15/4240N. For alterations to roof design.	04/07/2016	Approved with conditions
(vii) 16/2841N	21 , Windmill Drive, Audlem, Cheshire East, CW3 0BE	Resubmission of application 16/1183N for the Demolition of existing single storey garage/porch and creation of a two storey side extension and front porch.	01/07/2016	Approved with conditions
(viii) 16/2443N	Mild Mays, SCHOOL LANE, AUDLEM, CW3 0BA	Single storey extension to rear of dwelling.	30/06/2016	Approved with conditions
(ix) 16/2462N	The Old Kettle Workshops, Kettle Lane, Chapel End, Audlem, Buerton, CW3 0BX	Variation of Condition 7 on 15/4241N Demolition of Existing Buildings and Erection of 6 Dwellings and Access Works	22/06/2016	Approved with conditions

51.4 White Lion Development Hankelow

This matter was raised by a resident. At the recent public meeting in Hankelow there was unanimous support for objecting to the planning application and to seek for the property to be declared an Asset of Community Value (ACV) with the idea that it could be used as a community hub. Cllr G Seddon reported that The White Lion has now been declared an ACV by CEC. An action group has been formed and the matter is ongoing.

16.52 FINANCIAL MATTERS

52.1 Finance Report - The Clerk reported that the External Auditor had completed the audit of the Annual Return 2015-16 and no matters were raised. The Annual Return, approved and accepted by the Parish Council, will be published on the website for public access now that the audit has been concluded and the notice of conclusion posted on the noticeboard. The Clerk also reported that the income and expenditure for the Public Conveniences continue to follow projections and that the interest earned on the deposit account continues to improve.

52.2 Payments Made

18.8.16	1525	K Dixon	Salaries	£	501.10
18.8.16	1526	G Davies	Street Cleaning	£	324.00
18.8.16	1527	3 Counties Cleaning	Public Conveniences	£	182.00
18.8.16	1528	United Utilities	Public Conveniences	£	117.50
18.8.16	1530	S R Booth & Son	Public Conveniences	£	55.00
18.8.16	1531	ChALC	Councillor Training	£	50.00
4.7.16	DD	extra energy	Public Conveniences	£	25.48
25.7.16	SO	then media	Web services	£	24.10
4.8.16	DD	extra energy	Public Conveniences	£	24.75
25.8.16	SO	then media	Web services	£	24.10

Resolved: the above accounts were approved for payment retrospectively.

52.3 Authorisation of cheques

Resolved: the following accounts were approved for payment

K Dixon	Salaries	£	501.10
G Davies	Street Cleaning	£	468.00
K Dixon	Office Expenses	£	46.58
3 Counties Cleaning	Public Conveniences		175.50
Audlem Methodist Church	Room Hire	£	45.00
K Dixon	Office Equipment	£	329.95
Delmar Press	Newsletter	£	437.00
BDO LLP	External Audit	£	240.00

52.4 Receipts - The following receipts were noted:

6.4.16	TOILETS	HONESTY BOX INCOME	53.74
13.5.16	TOILETS	HONESTY BOX INCOME	48.80
1.4.16	SANTANDER BANK	INTEREST	18.97
2.5.16	SANTANDER BANK	INTEREST	22.95
1.6.16	SANTANDER BANK	INTEREST	23.73
6.6.16	HMRC	VAT REBATE	1865.43
1.7.16	SANTANDER BANK	INTEREST	22.97
22.6.16	TOILETS	HONESTY BOX INCOME	85.01
1.8.16	SANTANDER BANK	INTEREST	23.75

16.53 POST OFFICE

Cllrs Jones and G Seddon reported on their recent meeting with Antoinette Sandbach MP. It appeared that the old PO premises may now be available to The Post Office and they are exploring this option. It was agreed that pressure must be kept on The Post Office to find a speedy solution to this matter. Cllrs Johnson and G Seddon reported on discussions with

Delamere Council re setting up a community Post Office if all other options failed.
CEC Cllr Rachel Bailey joined the meeting at this point.

16.54 PLAYING FIELD COMPLEX

(i) Condition of playing field. The very poor state of the field, particularly in the goalmouth was raised. It was agreed that this was potentially a H&S issue. The Clerk was requested to write to CEC to ask for a proper repair to be carried out and to ask for a refund of fees to the Football Club for the period the field is unusable.

(ii) Statement by Cllr Hill. Cllr Hill distributed a written statement to Councillors concerning the way the possible acquisition of the Playing Field Complex had been handled. Cllr Hill suggested that there had been excessive debate and delay in applying to take over the complex. He also stated that Councillors had not been informed of consultation meetings for Parish Councils on CEC's new devolution policy, that there was a 'new approach' being suggested by the Parish Council, and that 'the car park and tennis courts would not be included in the 30-year lease' (rather than full devolution) now being proposed by CEC. Cllr Hill requested that a vote be taken that night to proceed on that basis (30 year lease for just the playing field and play area) and also that night a full investigation of the issue be undertaken. Cllr Hill requested that a full copy of the Statement be included in the Minute (see Appendix 1). There was heated debate following this statement. Cllr Hill was reminded that Councillors had only just received the statement and had no time to read it; also that no vote could be taken as it had not been included on the Agenda. Ward Cllr Bailey stated that the Parish Council had asked to take on the playing fields as Councillors felt it would be better safeguarded as a result of a transfer to the Parish Council; CEC had not offered it. The transfer of the public convenience was undertaken due to a budgetary driver – there were cost reasons behind the offer of a full transfer. Similarly, the community benefits for the transfer of the land for APHAX were the prime driver for the decision for full transfer of the land behind the Public Hall. Ward Cllr Bailey stated that legal processes take time, all playing fields are protected by Sport England. In her view the Parish Council had given mixed messages to CEC which contributed to delays on CEC's side. This was disputed by many Councillors involved in the process.

Councillors were reminded on the recent meeting with CEC officials where the concerns over the newly proposed 30 year lease for Assets of this nature were realised. Cllr Consterdine had particular concerns about the ability to obtain grants with only a 30 year lease. A letter had been sent to CEC on this matter suggesting a full transfer with the field protected by Fields in Trust but no response had yet been received.

Cllr Johnson stated that in his view at no time had the Parish Council indicated it did not want to go ahead with the transfer and that any delays were responsible and necessary prior to taking on a transfer of this nature. He proposed that Councillors ask CEC to give full details of their current proposals and a timeline for any transfer and that this be done through Audlem's Ward Cllr Rachel Bailey. Councillors agreed to this course of action. Councillors will review the statement in detail prior to the next meeting and advice will be sought from ChALC as to how best to proceed following Cllr Hill's allegations.

16.55 PARISH PATHS

Cllr Jones will set up an initial meeting in October.

16.56 PARISH COUNCIL MATTERS

56.1 Buttermarket - Mr Bugeja reported that he had seen a crack in one of the columns of the Buttermarket. It was agreed that a Structural Engineer should be instructed to carry out a survey and the Buttermarket cordoned off for safety reasons if recommended in the interim; the Clerk will liaise with the CEC Conservation Officer to find an appropriate specialist.

56.2 Longhill Moss - The Clerk reported that despite difficulties in obtaining quotes for the work, she is hopeful of receiving at least 2 quotations shortly.

56.3 Public Conveniences - The cleaning contractor had reported a persistently overflowing urinal and plumbers SR Booth & Son had attended and resolved the issue. Cllr Hill commented that the issue is probably related to a previous issue and he had now advised the contractor of a suitable ongoing solution.

56.4 Training – Planning Q&A - Cllr Jones is in the process of arranging a suitable date for Councillors and asked for Councillors to advise of their availability.

56.5 Training – Devolved Services - It was agreed that the Parish Council would contribute £50 per person for the Asset Transfer training being conducted by CCA for Frodsham Town Council, and Councillors were asked to indicate their availability for various dates throughout the Autumn via the web calendar set up by CCA.

56.6 Personnel - CEC is able to offer refresher training for lengthsmen and dates of the next available courses are awaited. Cllr Jones reported that the nationally agreed payscales mean that the Clerk is entitled to a small payrise, backdated to April 2016, it was resolved that it should be paid. Cllr Jones is also intending to work on benchmarking the Clerk's two roles so that they are combined into one position, and the correct salary level determined.

16.57 CORRESPONDENCE

Roland Hall had written, on behalf of the APHAX committee, regarding the teenshelter relocation. The Clerk will again ask CEC about this matter.

Hazel Horton had written about the possibility of installing a bus shelter at the bottom of the Whitchurch Bank for the local elderly residents, this was discussed and the Clerk will enquire from CEC about the feasibility of a bus shelter in this location. Consultation would have to be carried out with those living locally about potential use to confirm there is a real need for a shelter.

Mrs HC Horton had written about the possibility of relocating one of the benches at Emberton Place to the nearby bus stop for the benefit of elderly residents. This was discussed and will be further investigated.

16.58 AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

58.1 Highways & Transportation - The Footpaths at Green Lane and Whitchurch Road were overgrown and difficult to pass and work was required on a gully in Windmill Drive. The Clerk again asked Councillors to notify her of areas requiring improvement so she could notify CEC.

58.2 Community - No report.

58.3 Youth & Education - No report.

58.4 Law & Order - Cllr Siddorns reported that he attended the local Cluster Meeting prior to the spate of local break-ins. There were concerns raised about speeding locally but there has been a shortage of working speed cameras available.

58.5 Local Tourism & Business - Cllr Johnson reported that The Transport Festival, Gathering of Historic Boats and beer festival had been successful and that as a result of

village events the field at the top of Green Lane has been well used this summer for parking and camping. It was agreed that the Clerk should write to the organisers of all three events to congratulate them.

It was noted that Mr Dek Owen, who has worked so hard in leading the Towpath Taskforce in its work to improve the canalside area in Audlem is stepping down from the role and it was agreed that the Clerk should write to Mr Owen on the Parish Council's behalf to thank him for his contribution to the village..

(i) Tourism Group – Mr Cartwright confirmed that he was in the process of arranging the next meeting of the group and would notify Cllr Johnson of the date.

58.6 Heritage & Localism (see planning)

58.7 Wildlife & Ecology - It was agreed that local groups such as ADAS, AEG and ADAPT be invited to put forward members to join a working party for the conservation area.

58.8 Health - The PPG meeting is on Wednesday 7th September.

58.9 Communications - Nothing to report.

58.10 Access & Inclusion - Cllrs Thompson reported that he and Cllr Higham had looked into the community bus offer but it was not pursued at this time as there was no choice in the vehicle allocated.

58.11 Devolved Services – see 16.54

58.12 ADAPT – No report

58.13 Commons & Greens Committee - It was reported that Chris Knibbs had enquired about the overgrown wooded section of Longhill Moss and there was a discussion on possible solutions to the management of this with the school and Reaseheath College suggested.

58.14 Street Lighting - Cllr Consterdine reported a daylight burner between Churchfields and Church View, the Clerk will log this on the CEC website.

16.59 **COUNCILLORS' REPORTS ON ADDITIONAL MEETINGS ATTENDED**

16.60 **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE NEXT MEETING**

Longhill Moss wood

16.61 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING – MONDAY 3rd OCTOBER 2016**

CHAIRMAN _____

Date _____

APPENDIX 1

Playing Field Statement

I wish to make a statement concerning the way the possible acquisition of the Playing Field Complex has been handled, or I should say mishandled, by Audlem Parish Council. Full copies of what I want to say are being distributed to each member but I wish to read out a summary.

First I request that the Clerk records the full statement verbatim in the minutes.

Councillors will know that I, as a member of Audlem parish council, offered to be involved in the taking over the playing field complex (the field itself, tennis courts, children's play area and the car park) for £1 in September 2011. This was when we had taken over responsibility for the public toilets, which as everyone agrees, has been a great success and was the first example of asset devolution to a parish council by Cheshire East Council.

After raising the possibility of devolution of the playing field complex little happened for some three years. In September 2014, Audlem's application was, if we had acted promptly, in front of the queue for devolution as Cheshire East agreed on its Devolution Policy. We were told there was a limited window of opportunity that would keep us in pole position.

The council did start to act that Autumn of 2014 when an extraordinary parish council meeting attended by over sixty residents saw virtually all attending, with just one person against, vote for devolution of the complex.

This was followed almost immediately by a parish council meeting when there was also an overwhelming vote to proceed with the acquisition with only Councillors Geoff Seddon and Dave Siddorns voting against.

A sub-group was formed to look after the process as Cllr Siddorns suffered illness meaning he could not carry out his previous role with responsibility for devolution issues. It has to be said however, that he had failed in that role to progress the project for a very long time.

Over the period late 2014 to early 2015 a detailed report was developed by Councillors Frances Mary Christie, Richard Furber and myself.

Meetings were held with Cheshire East. Progress was held up for many weeks because some members of the council, largely those against the take-over, considered it to be biased. Eventually, in October 2015, a year later, a formal application was made to Cheshire East Council by the parish council to take over the full complex.

There was during this period much argument about the initial and on-going funding that would be required with, in my view, misleading sums being put forward by the parish council's finance committee (on which the two councillors opposed to the take-over make up the majority) and these misleading figures were even presented to the council.

I am aware that, because of all the delays and indecision by Audlem parish council, the Audlem application, caused CEC such frustration; it was moved from the front of the devolution queue by Cheshire East to the back. Others have been told by Cheshire East that is the case.

Meanwhile, Cheshire East Council was changing its policy on devolution. This would not have affected Audlem's project if this council had acted in a timely manner and carried out what the public and the council had voted for in 2014 by overwhelming majorities.

Cheshire East held consultation meetings for parish councils in June/July 2016 prior to introducing its new devolution policy. Despite the parish council receiving invitations, these were not made available to councillors, particularly the sub-group responsible for the project, and no-one from Audlem attended. I would very much like to know why councillors were not made aware of these meetings by the clerk.

The latest situation is that playing fields are now being let on 30-year leases rather than outright devolution. The latest Parish Council newsletter says that: "Councillors are concerned that residents would be liable for expensive maintenance which would require a higher local precept on an asset on which there would be no continuity of ownership. It would also be difficult to get grants towards costs on a relatively short lease. Additionally there would be no reduction in council tax."

These are almost precisely the arguments the two councillors opposed to the take-over used back in 2014. It appears that those arguments are being used to prepare the public for a complete change of approach by this council despite the overwhelming votes in favour of taking over the assets by the public and the parish council in 2014.

In contrast to this new approach hinted at in the Newsletter, which would in effect be reward for those opposed to the take-over and who have contributed to all the delays, I propose that the parish council proceeds to accept a 30-year lease as this will give ample control. Running on a lease has had no detrimental effect on Audlem Tennis Club, for example, and their ability to raise funds via grants and loans. Also, over a period of 30-years, there may be ample opportunity to move eventually to full control. Much changes with councils and council policy over such a period.

The Parish Council, if it does not wish to take on responsibly itself, can help arrange setting up a Charitable Trust that will also provide financial advantages and the parish council can pay the running costs. These sums have been allowed for in future budgets and, as we must always remember, the Precept we receive is for the community and not the parish council. We have built up more than adequate reserves to cover the initial and on-going costs.

Also, as the car park or tennis courts would not be included in the 30-year lease, the likely on-going costs would be very much lower than originally calculated.

Before concluding, I also ask that there is a full investigation by CHALC or a similar body as to how we have got into this mess, have let down the public, how we missed the date that would have kept us at the front of the devolution queue and how we have not been informed of consultation meetings we should have been at.

To conclude, we as a parish council must carry out what the public and the council voted for in 2014. We may have missed the opportunity, appallingly so by our own delays and indecision, to acquire the entire playing field complex outright but the 30-year lease option now on offer is very much cheaper and lower risk and I propose that tonight we vote to proceed positively and carry out what the public want.

If we don't proceed, we may have lost the opportunity to control a vital village asset through our own failures and by leasing we will have every opportunity in future years to ensure the playing field and Play Area are kept in excellent condition and possibly acquire it outright as Cheshire East Council policy changes.

Michael Hill

Summary

A brief history of the complex:

In September 2011 we were offered the chance to take over the complex for £1. Little if anything happened for 3 years.

In Autumn 2014 we were told we were front of the Cheshire East devolution queue but there was a limited window of opportunity.

In October and November 2014 the public and the parish council voted overwhelmingly to take over the complex.

Delays and indecision followed as we argued over figures but a sub-committee delivered a report in Spring 2015 with a Business Plan.

A formal application was made only in October 2015 by which time we had been moved to the back of the devolution, entirely because of our delays and indecision.

We now have a 30-year lease option which means much lower costs and risks contrary to what is stated in the latest Parish Council Newsletter. We should have a formal investigation in to how we have mishandled and mismanaged this entire process.

If we do not proceed with a lease, this will be a victory for the two parish councillors who voted against the acquisition in 2014 and who have contributed significantly to all the delays.

I propose we vote tonight to proceed positively on what is a lower risk and much cheaper acquisition via a 30-year lease meaning we have control over this vital asset which the public voted overwhelmingly in favour of taking over almost two years ago. Or, to be absolutely democratic call for an open meeting with the public given the right to decide.