



AUDLEM
PARISH COUNCIL

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Audlem Parish councillors are very aware of the concerns of the community and the lack of information imparted regarding its financial position. Councillors are now able to explain the reasons for the extreme cash flow difficulties.

Due to apparently fraudulent transactions occurring on the Audlem Parish Council (APC) Santander bank accounts from early February to mid-May 2022, APC's current and reserve accounts were reduced to virtually zero.

This only became apparent in mid-July when the new Chair was enabled to obtain access to the bank accounts. Immediately, APC contacted the police and Santander, and within days contracted a specialist forensic accountant to investigate.

Investigations are continuing via Santander Fraud Department, the Police and the Council's forensic investigator.

As criminal proceedings are ongoing, APC were advised they should not risk hindering Cheshire Constabulary investigations by disclosing information to the public. However, we have now been told we can release the following information from the Police:

'On Monday 4 July Cheshire Police received reports of a number of suspicious transactions on a parish council bank account.

An investigation was launched and, following enquiries, a suspect was arrested on Sunday 9 September, in connection with the allegations, on suspicion of fraud.

Following the arrest, a vast amount of material and electronic devices were seized which now need to be examined further.

The suspect has since been released under investigation pending further enquiries.

This is a very much a live investigation which is expected to take several months and while enquiries are ongoing Police encourage residents not to speculate.

Further updates will be provided when available'.

It is therefore apparent, to councillors, that this issue will not be resolved quickly.

Councillors apologise to residents that we are still not in a position to give a more detailed report, but we commit to keeping the community updated when we can.

We are thankful for the support of Cheshire East Council and the Cheshire Association of Local Councils without whose assistance at this time the Council could not continue to function.

Councillors remain optimistic that a favourable outcome will be secured and that with your support, we can continue to deliver on behalf of the community of Audlem.

We can only thank the people of Audlem for their patience as we work behind the scenes to resolve this extraordinary and very challenging occurrence.

END OF STATEMENT