

# **SUBMISSION TO CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL TO SUPPORT THE DEVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY ASSETS COMPRISING THE CAR PARK, PLAYING FIELD, PLAY AREA, TENNIS COURTS AND WOODED AREA DOWN TO THE SHROPPIE FLY CAR PARK TO AUDLEM PARISH COUNCIL**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The decision taken on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015 by Cheshire East Council's Finance Committee that '... approval be given for the following assets to be prioritized for approval to transfer and that reports on their transfer be prepared and considered by the Portfolio Holder as a priority:- a. Audlem – Car Park, Playing field and playground and land at rear of Audlem public hall....' was greeted with pleasure by the vocal group of residents who have argued in favour of the playing field being transferred to the Parish Council.

In 2014 our Ward Councillor, Cllr Rachel Bailey, persuaded Cheshire East Council of the potential community benefit of such a transfer. The Parish Council was then surprised to find that Cheshire East Council also proposed devolving the car park, tennis courts and playground to the Parish. Public and Parish Council meetings demonstrated support for the takeover of this whole area and a significant amount of work was done by a Working Group to ensure the Parish Council was fully aware of what would be involved.

## **THE BENEFIT OF THE LAND TO THE COMMUNITY**

The assets concerned are used extensively for the wider benefit of the local community and also by residents of adjacent parishes and the many tourists who come to Audlem.

The Playing field area hosts many community events, organised by volunteers, which are the envy of many other communities and are important factors in Audlem's reputation as a vibrant village.

These include:

- Audlem Carnival – established in 1812
- Picnic in the Park
- Festival of Transport
- Bonfire and fireworks

The complex is also important to local residents' recreational and social life with opportunities for children to play and learn tennis & football skills locally and to enjoy the outdoors. An adult football team uses the pitch on Sundays and, in line with other adult teams, is charged for the use by Cheshire East Council.

The northern side of the field is a designated dog exercise area – the only one in the village. This is supported by Dog Waste Bins for owners to easily dispose of their waste.

### **Car Park**

The car park is currently maintained by Cheshire East Council. It is the only public car park in the village and serves the local Medical Practice and the Public Hall as well as providing parking for people using the shops and walking in the locality. There is currently no charge for parking on the car park but there is always a risk that compulsory parking charges will be imposed in line with the other car parks in East Cheshire. Residents feel strongly that parking should remain free of charge.

### **Playing field**

In addition to general recreational use by children, dog walkers and knock-about footballers, the playing field is used as Audlem Football Club's pitch. The field has not been maintained to the level required by the Football Club and it is hoped that local management would ensure direct control of grounds maintenance and enhance the quality of the recreation area.

### **Play area**

The children's playground is managed by Cheshire East Council. It is extensively used by local children and visitors. Although safety checks are carried out these do not appear to be undertaken with the level of frequency residents would like and when safety issues are reported they are not acted upon in a timely manner as is required under H&S rules. Local management would ensure that local residents could take part in ensuring the safety of the play area.

### **Tennis Courts**

The Tennis Club Committee manages and maintains the area which is used mainly by members but the public are able to use the pitches according to the terms of the lease with Cheshire East Council. Audlem Parish Council would have the opportunity to negotiate a new lease with the Tennis Club to secure this long-term facility

### **Wooded area between Playing Field and the Shroppie Fly**

This is a sloping wooded area which has been left in an unkempt state. Local environmental groups are keen to manage and maintain this area for the benefit of conserving wildlife and also for children to play safely in a more 'wild' area.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Since the proposal was first made to take over the Playing Field the Parish Council has been developing a fund towards its future management. The Parish Council's financial situation is strong and a copy of the latest accounts is attached. It is recognized that the devolution of the Playing Field will not be met by any proportionate reduction in Council Tax and that in years to come residents may have to pay a higher Parish precept to maintain the area.

A financial plan has been prepared to support the proposed takeover and a copy is attached to this document.

## **PREVIOUSLY DEVOLVED ASSETS**

In 2011 Audlem Parish Council took over the running of the Public Toilets from Cheshire East Council when they decided to close these (non-statutory) facilities throughout the Authority. The transfer was well managed by a Working Group of the Parish Council who liaised with officials from Cheshire East Council throughout. This has been a very successful move and the condition of the toilets is always positively commented upon by residents and visitors. An honesty box generates a small

income of between £400 - £500 p.a. which is used to offset day to day running costs. This has set the benchmark for how the Parish is able to positively manage maintenance and costs and has contributed to community confidence that the Parish Council is well placed to take on the Playing Field area.

## **FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE AREA**

The Parish Council recognizes the importance of the assets identified to the community as a whole and wishes to ensure that the land remains as a community asset for recreational use. Prior to the vote being taken to proceed with the transfer a report was drawn up by a Parish Council Working Group providing Councillors and residents with evidence of community consultation, costs, a risk/benefit analysis and means of managing the risk involved in managing the complex.

In terms of future management it is envisaged that initially the Parish Council will take a very 'hands on' approach whilst all the various processes and procedures are set up, tried and tested. During this period further research will be done into the best means of future management. This includes an investigation into setting up a charitable trust through which this asset (and possibly other Parish Council assets) could be managed. Advice is being sought from the Charities Commission and Fields in Trust and the Parish Council will set up a sub-committee to manage this activity.

## **CONCLUSION**

Audlem Parish Council trusts that the information provided here and in the accompanying documents will be sufficient to demonstrate the commitment, enthusiasm and ability of Councillors to take on and manage these community assets to the benefit of both current and future residents. We formally request Cheshire East Council to agree '.... that approval be given for the assets to be prioritized for approval to transfer.....' as the Finance meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015 indicated and that the transfer can be completed as swiftly as possible.

**Audlem Parish Council**

Print Date 08/07/2015

**Reconciliation of accounts for the period  
01/04/14 to 31/03/15**

Position as at 31/03/2014		Position as at 31/03/2015
£ 52,104.29	Balance brought forward at 1st April	£ 63,433.48
£ 43,430.60	Plus total receipts ( ex VAT )	£ 46,386.34
£ 95,534.89		£ 109,819.82
£ 31,529.27	Less total payments ( ex VAT )	£ 36,844.42
£ 64,005.62		£ 72,975.40
£ 572.14	VAT receipts less payments	£ 955.11
£ 63,433.48	Total	£ 73,930.51
Represented by:-		
£ 34,989.38	Santander Current a/c	£ 44,381.89
£ 15,786.06	Santander Instant Reserve a/c	£ 15,817.68
£ 12,726.85	Co-op Bank a/c	£ 14,051.57
£ 63,502.29		£ 74,251.14
£ 68.81	Uncashed cheques	£ 320.63
£ 63,433.48	Balance carried forward	£ 73,930.51
£ 2,540.00	Reserved Funds	£ 6,440.00
£ 60,893.48	Cash Available	£ 67,490.51

# **Hester Field - Car Park - Playground, Tennis Courts transfer to APC**

## **Immediate one-off costs on takeover**

Tree survey and inspection for insurance ( duty of care )		2	£ 800.00		£ 800.00
Signage for ownership , honesty box, contact numbers etc.		£ 2,000.00		£ 2,000.00	
Playground survey	Completed Oct 2014	£ 80.00		£ 80.00	
Legal fees	Report available	£ 250.00		£ 250.00	
Surveyor fees		£ 500.00		£ 500.00	
Set-up costs including tree safety works, playground repairs & o/h		£ 1,500.00		£ 1,500.00	
Set up CSD for Trust				£ 300.00	
			<b>£ 4,880.00</b>	<b>£ 5,980.00</b>	
<b><u>Costs Relating to the Hester football field</u></b>					
Car park lighting	Acquiline Quotation	5 years estimated lifetime	£ 1,188.40		£ 1,188.40
Car park resurfacing	To be handed over in good condition	Further quotations being sought	£ 2,185.00		£ 2,185.00
			<b>£ 3,373.40</b>	<b>£ 3,373.40</b>	

## **Operating costs**

<b>Administration</b>					
Increase in insurance for field, playground, and carpark area	Additional to APC existing cover	£ 80.00	Separate cover	£ 700.00	
Trustee indemnity				£ 500.00	
Council Tax		£ 1,860.00	Not charged if part of trust		
Increase in Clerk admin hours 8 hours/week = 150 hours/annum	£9.30/hr future national rates	£ 1,395.00	Assume volunteers will undertake		
Increase in APC hours 2 hours/month = 24 hours		£ 225.00	Assume volunteers will undertake		
		<b>£ 3,280.00</b>		<b>£ 1,200.00</b>	
<b>Grounds maintenance</b>					
Every two weeks in growing season as necessary or before events	Sealridge Quotation	£ 1,850.00		£ 1,850.00	
Grass cutting of the football pitch and surrounding area (CSC 15 cuts)					
Grass cutting of the children's play area and disposal of cuttings					
Mowing all areas including hedge bottoms and around seats, trees etc. as necessary.					
Weed control as appropriate					
Hedge trimming as appropriate					
Tree pruning as necessary					
Repair of worn areas as necessary (CSC grasshutch only)					
Harvesting of pitch					
Pitch marking as and when necessary					
Painting goal posts	Flame gun not whitelining	£ 800.00		£ 800.00	
Annual maintenance other than ground works	Supply of paint only	£ 50.00		£ 50.00	
	I.e. fences, bins etc. based on past APC experience	£ 1,000.00		£ 1,000.00	
Annual ROPA playing field inspection		£ 65.00		£ 65.00	
		<b>£ 3,265.00</b>		<b>£ 3,265.00</b>	
<b>Playground</b>					
Inspection of playground area per ROPA Inspector	4 visits @ £60	£ 240.00		£ 240.00	
Weekly survey	Honorarium if needed	£ 500.00		£ 500.00	
Training of weekly inspectors	£ x £227 (plus VAT)	£ 685.00		£ 685.00	
Minor running repairs		£ 200.00		£ 200.00	
		<b>£ 1,625.00</b>		<b>£ 1,625.00</b>	
<b>Carpark</b>					
Hedge cutting	covered in playing field costs				
Drain and gully clearance	confirmed. Parkers	£ 200.00		£ 200.00	
Unleaded coffee costs for surface water	Calculated from LU & WCA Info/Confirmed	£ 200.00		£ 200.00	
Power for carpark lights	CSC to supply and invoice	£ 150.00		£ 150.00	
Honesty box & signage	Re-evaluate	£ 250.00		£ 250.00	
Carpark lamp maintenance	Work done by CSC estimate	£ 1,000.00		£ 1,000.00	
Sweeping & Stying	lengthman v/hr p.w. @£7.20 per hr	£ 875.00		£ 875.00	
		<b>£ 2,675.00</b>		<b>£ 2,675.00</b>	
<b>TOTAL Annual running cost</b>					
		<b>£ 12,810.00</b>		<b>£ 13,175.00</b>	
<b>Income</b>					
1 Rent from tennis club		£ 880.00		£ 880.00	
2 Football games - ASLT	Parish Council to decide on charges	£ 800.00		£ 800.00	
3 Parking/honesty box	Parish Council to decide if appropriate	£ 1,000.00		£ 1,000.00	
		<b>£ 2,680.00</b>		<b>£ 2,680.00</b>	
<b>Net annual income cost</b>					
		<b>£ 10,130.00</b>		<b>£ 10,495.00</b>	
<b>Capital depreciation &amp; long term costs to be ringfenced annually</b>					
Car park Surface maintenance and depreciation 284sqm	Skim & 40mm tarmac £14/M2 over 15 years	£ 2,185.00		£ 2,185.00	
Relining	£1600 over 5 years	£ 380.00		£ 380.00	
Lighting					
Cameras					
Playground Estimated initial cost £54,000					
Installed value of items range £25,000 to £8000					
Can be replaced separately	Funding usually available so budget for 30% matched funding over 10 years	£ 1,600.00		£ 1,600.00	
Tree survey and inspection 8 years is standard interval	£800	£ 300.00		£ 300.00	
		<b>£ 4,285.00</b>		<b>£ 4,285.00</b>	
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL RUNNING COST</b>					
		<b>£ 14,845.00</b>		<b>£ 15,060.00</b>	

## **Notes**

1. Estimate
2. Ring fenced if not used each year.
3. Based on Burreton playing field costs

## **Activity costs from Burreton**

Training of inspectors £227 per person  
Annual inspection £85 for >5 play items\*  
Annual inspection of Playing field £85  
\*\* = £5 each additional play item