



AUDLEY RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT FOR ACTIVITIES IN 2014/15

The Parish Council A.G.M takes place May each year, at the 2014 meeting, Mr H Proctor and Mr T Sproston were appointed as Chair and Vice Chair respectively for the ensuing year.

Audley Rural Parish Council consists of fifteen councillors and is divided into three district wards.

Audley Ward	Councillor	Mr D Cornes
	Councillor	Mrs V Pearson
	Councillor	Mrs B Kinnersley
Bignall End	Councillor	Mr P J Morgan
	Councillor	Mrs C D Cornes
	Councillor	Mrs A Beech
	Councillor	Mr A Wemyss
	Councillor	Mr H Proctor
Halmer End	Councillor	Mr M Dolman
	Councillor	Revd J Taylor
	Councillor	Mr E Durber
	Councillor	Mr T Sproston
	Councillor	Mr C C Cooper
	Councillor	Mr M Joynson
	Councillor	Mr P Breuer

This year will see the whole Parish Council up for nomination due to the four yearly cycles of elections for Local Councils. The new Parish Councillors will take their seats after the 7th May 2015.

Council Meetings

Meetings are normally held on the 3rd Thursday of each month at various locations around the Parish, there may also be additional meetings during the year to cater for any extra volume of business.

County and Borough Council Representation

The Parish is represented at Staffordshire County Council by Cllr Ann Beech and at Newcastle Borough Council by Cllr Bert Proctor, Cllr Andrew Wemyss, Cllr Ann Beech, Cllr Ian Wilkes and Cllr David Beckett.

Parish Clerk

Our parish clerk is Mrs Clare Withington, who returned from maternity leave in April 2014.

Planning applications

Throughout the year, the Council receives planning applications for consultation. The Council is committed to avoiding inappropriate developments and may comment on behalf of the residents in an advisory capacity, however, the final decision in each case rests with the relevant Planning Authority. Between the period of April 2014 and March 2015 – the Parish Council have commented on 72 applications. A number of them have been called in to the Borough Council's Planning Committee for full deliberation of the decision, usually due to a number of objections and also where it involves developing green belt or large developments on the boundary of the Parish.

Allotments

The parish has allotment sites at Audley and Halmer End, 75 plots being provided between these sites; normally allotments are generally well cultivated. Audley Allotment Association are now the leaseholders of the 2 sites at Audley, and are raising funding for security fencing around the perimeter of the site which the Parish Council have also supported with a financial donation. A number of improvements have also been funded by the Parish Council at Halmer End, including a new path, clearing off rubble and a boundary fence. A new Allotment Association is now forming at Halmer End.

Grant Applications

Five applications, shown below, have been supported by the Parish Council amounting to funding of £2,976.00 from Newcastle Borough Council's Community Chest fund.

Scot Hay village fair	£500.00
Bignall End Cricket Club	£800.00
Church St James PCC	£800.00
Audley youth Drop in	£698.28
Scouts 77th Audley	£177.72

Additionally the following groups received funding directly from the Parish Council to support their activities which benefit the Parish:

Staffordshire Police	Donation towards youth fishing event	£250.00
Audley First Responders	Donation towards car	£1500.00
Audley Library	Contribution to adult learners day	£150.00
Cara	Donation towards the Carnival/Fun day	£300.00
Audley MGT	Donation towards maintenance of green	£700.00
Breast Cancer Campaign	Donation towards Pink Week Audley	£500.00
Audley Allotment Association	Donation towards security fencing	£1000.00

Notice Boards

There are eight Parish Council notice boards situated throughout the parish. These are well used and contain the latest information in relation to the Parish council meetings and other relevant public sector information.

Website and publicity

A website exists to provide Parish information to the wider community. The website is updated at regular intervals, and to date has been visited by a large number of people. Standard information about the Parish Council is also published in Audley Community News.

Children's Play areas and Wildlife Area

The Parish provides and maintains 8 play areas situated at Alsager Road Audley, Albert Street and Bignall End Road in Bignall End, Miles Green, Halmer End, Alsagers Bank and Scot Hay, also, 'Leddy's Field' wildlife area in Audley, is a very popular venue with residents.

Play areas are subject to monthly inspections, reports are submitted to the parish council meetings. On-going painting and maintenance of all the equipment are carried out as required during the year. Expensive damage to the play equipment and surfaces continues, which results in money being spent repairing equipment, rather than replacing it. New monitoring arrangements are in place to monitor the excessive dog fouling on the playing fields and dogs off the leads/excluded. Known people seen allowing their dogs to foul or breach the Dog Control Orders will be reported to the Dog Warden who will issue fixed penalties.

A new basket swing has been installed at Alsagers Bank, with one planned for Bignall End Road later in April. A new tarmac surface and markings has been installed at Riley's Field MUGA. The Parish Council now has a Play Area Improvement strategy and funding bids are being developed to raise in excess of £120k to create 3 super play areas (1 per parish ward) at Queen Street, Albert Street and Halmer End over the next 2 years. Other play areas will continue to be maintained. The Parish Council are also working in partnership with Children of Audley Resident's Association to install youth equipment at Queen Street.

Annual Maintenance Programme

The Annual Maintenance programme continues for the year up to the end of 2014/15, and has been awarded locally to a contractor to provide a further 3 years maintenance.

Parish Bowling Greens

The Audley Bowling Club continues to thrive, however, Halmer End Bowling Club has received additional help but still needs more membership to retain this asset at Halmer End. The signs for both clubs have been refurbished or replaced.

Public Seats

A total of 75 seats are located around the Parish and an ongoing maintenance programme will continue to keep these in good condition.

Leddys Field

An innovative green project using horses to extract wood was carried out over the winter to thin approximately 240 trees as part of the ongoing maintenance programme. Local children had the opportunity to see the horses in action, following a litter pick. More work is planned for this year.

Bluebell Wood, Alsagers Bank

This area has been subject to inspections over the last few months and will be monitored for any future work that is required.

Margaret's Garden, Church Street

Improvements have been made to level the area, and improve the access and seating.

Annual presentations

The Parish Council annually awards two trophies for an individual's work in the community; this year a third award was added in memory of the late Mrs. Elsie Kelsal, a long serving member of the parish council and stalwart of the community. The presentations took place in September, following a new nominations process:

- Mr and Mrs Johnson – Services to the Community
- Mr T Tooth - Services to the Environment
- Lewis Moore – Outstanding Young Person

Millennium Green Trust

Once again, a payment of £700 was authorised to the Millennium Green Trust for its on-going work.

Bateswood Park

Support continues to be provided to the Fishing Group and the Borough Council have been asked to provide additional resources to maintain the wildlife area – however litter, dog fouling and flytipping continue to be a problem for this area.

Great Oak/Diglake opencast mining

Following a number of public meetings held, a long list of objections were submitted from the Parish Council in response to the planning application. Before a decision was taken by the County Council, the application was withdrawn by UK Coal, however work will continue to ensure that any future applications can be defended.

Other activities

The list is endless but here is a summary of a few of the other things carried out by the Parish Council:

- Provision of additional grit bins and litter bins
- Action taken on overgrown hedges by highways/pavements
- Organisation of Remembrance parade and maintenance/cleaning of the War memorials at Alsagers Bank and Audley
- Requesting action from Highways regarding the lack of maintenance of roads and pavements in the Parish
- Campaigning to save Audley Library from closure
- Displaying a Christmas Tree in the Audley St James Mother's Union Christmas Tree Festival
- Supporting Audley in Pink week
- Working with partners to address the ongoing parking issues in the Parish, particularly around the schools and Village centre.

Parish Precept

The Precept was lowered this year to take account of a slight increase the year before due to the reduction in numbers of eligible properties for the council tax calculation. £41,814 has been raised through the Precept, with a grant contribution from Newcastle Borough Council of £9,748 plus £4,397 from the Government to assist with the reduction in Council tax base. The next year will see a slight increase in the precept by 2% in view of anticipated cuts to Parish funds from the Borough Council and/or Government. More information on the finances can be found on the Parish Council website – www.audleyparishcouncil.org

As Chair of the Parish council, I would like to thank all of the Parish Councillors for their support during the year and their on-going hard work on behalf of the people of the Parish of Audley.



Cllr H Proctor
16 April 2015