



AUDLEY RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT FOR ACTIVITIES IN 2019/20

At the time of writing this Annual Report (April 2020) we are experiencing unprecedented times with the pandemic known as Covid-19 or coronavirus. However, it is important to capture the good work completed over the last financial year (2019/20) although there is currently no Annual Parish meeting planned where this would normally be presented.

Audley Rural Parish Council consists of fifteen ward councillors and a Parish Clerk :

Audley Ward	Councillor	Mrs Valerie Pearson
	Councillor	Mrs Catherine Richardson
	Councillor	Mrs Nicola Myatt
	Councillor	Ms Anna Borowski Baskeyfield
Bignall End	Councillor	Mr Nick Hayes (Chair)
	Councillor	Mr Deane Jervis (Vice Chair – Jan 2020)
	Councillor	Mr David Butler
	Councillor	Mr Ron Kinnersley
Halmer End	Councillor	Mr Nick Crisp
	Councillor	Mr Matthew Whitmore
	Councillor	Mr Rob Moody (co opted Sept 19)
	Councillor	Mr Mike Joynson
	Councillor	Mr Ron Garlick
Parish Clerk	Councillor	Mr Chris C Cooper
	Councillor	VACANT
	Councillor	Mrs Clare Withington

The Parish Council A.G.M takes place in May each year. At the 2019 meeting, Mr N Hayes and Revd J Taylor were appointed as Chair and Vice Chair respectively for the ensuing year. In May 2019, Cllr B Proctor stood down from the position of Chair, and also the Parish Council after 12 years. Also, Revd J Taylor stood down from the Parish Council in December 2019 following 5 years of service. Both are sadly missed and their input during their time on the Parish Council was invaluable. Fortunately, both continue to contribute greatly to parish life. Mr D Jervis became the Vice Chair appointed in January 2020.

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 Sue Moffatt and Cllr Ian Wilkes.

Planning applications

Throughout the year, the Council receives planning applications for consultation. The Council is committed to avoiding inappropriate developments and is asked by the Planning Authority to express its views on each application and also any comments passed to it by the residents. This they do in an advisory capacity only, as the final decision in each case rests with the relevant Planning Authority. Between the period of April 2019 and March 2020 – the Parish Council have commented on 83 applications (a decrease of 2 from last year). As in previous years, several 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 where it involves developing green belt or large developments on the boundary of the

Parish. The Borough Council's Joint Local Plan is expected to commence again in the spring/summer 2020, when the policies affecting the Green Belt land will be consulted upon. Following this, consultation on the sites for development will be held around autumn 2020. These will identify new housing sites and are most likely to see some development in the Green Belt within the Parish. All residents are strongly advised to input into both consultations to ensure you have your say – as this may be your only opportunity to shape the future of the Parish.

Allotments

The parish has allotment sites at Audley and Halmer End. The Audley Allotment Association successfully run the Alsager Road site which has 58 plots let and a waiting list of 10. Recent achievements include holding social events to fund raise for a new mower, creation of a junior plot, a new website, photo competition, open day, Purple day stall raising £275 for cancer relief, community shed dedicated to Roger Beech, annual award and working with the schools.

The Parish Council manage the Halmer End Harrison Close site, with all 21 plots let and a waiting list of 3. Following the large turnover last year, there is stability now and the plot holders are working hard using their plots to grow fruit and veg.

Grant Applications

Once normal business has resumed, a new grant programme (for next year 2020/21) will be created to encourage small applications for funding from our community groups. This year the parish supported the following groups which contribute to parish life overall:

- Audley Millennium Green £800 towards maintenance
- Audley Methodist Church £2500 for the refurbishment of the Church Street car park
- Parish Cricket tournament trophy £135
- Minnie Pit memorial Group donation towards headsticks memorial £350
- Audley Brass Band £200 donation
- Halmer End CIC £1000 for pathway improvements

Parish Council Notice Boards and Website

There are eight notice boards containing the latest Parish Council information across the parish. A new noticeboard has been installed at Wood Lane and another planned at Bignall End. The website is updated at regular intervals and was viewed approx. 5600 times last year. Standard information about the Parish Council is also published in Audley Community News and through local social media groups.

Village Car Parks

A grant was provided to the Audley Methodist Church to carry out repairs to make the village car park safe and useable in Church Street. It is a big improvement and now provides a safe place to park. The lease for the Butchers Arms car park is still being pursued, and as soon as possible planning permission sought to resurface it once it is the responsibility of the Parish Council. Over the next year, work to identify more opportunities for off road parking will be explored.

Children's Play areas and Wildlife Areas

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, Rileys Field and Scot Hay. Play areas are subject to monthly inspections and reports are considered at the Parish Council meetings. On-going painting and maintenance of all the equipment is carried out as required during the year. Dog fouling on the playing fields still continues to be a problem. If you see a dog owner failing to pick up, please do report it to the dog warden (www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/all-services/environment/dog-wardens) who will fine people if they are known. New play equipment for Albert Street is undergoing the final stages of consultation with immediate neighbours, and subject to the current situation, will be tendered and then installed as soon as possible. This scheme

has also been a great success. CCTV (with infra-red night vision) is due to be installed at Halmer End play area. To address the issues with the pump/BMX track at CARA Queen Street, a National Lottery Awards for All £10k bid was submitted to resurface it and make it safe. The funding has now been secured and once we have the ability to start the work it will happen. CARA are also contributing to the funds, along with the Parish Council. This will be a great asset for the Parish.

Annual Maintenance Programme

The Annual Maintenance programme of the parish assets continues, and the contract has been awarded to a local contractor to provide a 3-year maintenance contract until March 2021.

Parish Bowling Greens

The Bring and Buy sale at Audley Bowling Club was successful with the defibrillator not in place. Whilst still having eight competitive teams, there is more emphasis on the 'togetherness' of the club. The shed which houses the equipment is not in good condition and the club could benefit from further shelter accommodation which are on the 'to do' list. Although overheads continue to rise, raffles at every match have enabled the club to hold their annual subscription rate at £25. The club are always on the lookout for new members, stressing the benefit - especially in older people - of taking necessary leisurely exercise in pleasant surroundings.

Halmer End Bowling Club have had a successful year winning promotion to the top division. There have been 7 new players joining from other venues, and a new team has now been created. Over £2000 has been spent to improve the ground. New players are always needed to help maintain the standard.

Public Seats and Bus Shelters

A total of 75 seats and 5 parish owned bus shelters are located around the Parish. An ongoing maintenance programme will continue to keep these in good condition.

Leddy's Field and Bluebell Wood, Alsagers Bank

Leddy's Field is a pleasant wildlife area in the centre of Audley village for the benefit of the parish. A fourth phase of tree thinning is planned for 2020, along with the ongoing routine maintenance. Bluebell Wood continues to be monitored for any future work that is required.

Margaret's Garden, Church Street

Mrs Pearson continues to maintain this area with the help of volunteers, and it provides a lovely feature for the centre of the village. Substantial work has been carried out to clear the site, as it has become an attraction for litter and ASB.

CCTV

The CCTV cameras installed are continuing to assist the police, with footage accessed when required as part of their investigations. There has been a marked reduction in the cost of repairs caused through criminal damage – this year approx. £800 has been spent. Police resources are allocated based on the numbers of crimes reported. Please do your bit and report non-urgent incidents to 101 or online, as soon you can. Sadly, the Police and Crime Commissioner bid for £6,000 to install CCTV in the Village centre was rejected due to the amount of funding we have already received. However, the Audley Locality Action Partnership has contributed £1500 and the Parish is continuing with the plans to install the cameras through its own means.

Vehicle Activated Signs and Speed Indicator Devices

The Parish Council have installed 4 additional posts at key areas across the Parish for the speed indicator devices. In addition, approval has been given to purchase a further 4 devices to be located at hot spots, this will occur over the next few months.

Annual presentations

The Parish Council annually awards three trophies:

R. W Edwards Community Award – This year it was awarded to the Audley Striders Running Club in recognition of their fantastic achievement to create a new running club in the Parish. The new club offers advice and guidance to people looking to take up running and is proving to be a great success.

Capewell Naylor Trophy for Services to the Environment – This year it was presented to Cllr Bert Proctor for his tireless efforts to help keep our Parish clean and tidy, both as a Borough Councillor and personally.

Elsie Kelsall Young Persons Award – The Parish Council were delighted to award this to Miss Ella Rae Baddeley, for her fantastic contribution made to the Parish Council while representing High School students.

Audley LAP Litter Pick

Thank you to those who have helped with the bi-monthly litter pick in Halmer End, Bignall End and Audley. All are welcome to join to help keep the Parish clean and tidy.

Parish Finances for 2019/20

A total income of £175,478 was received. This consisted of the Precept £155,593, the last Newcastle Borough Council grant £2,558 for concurrent functions and a grant of £4,397 for the reduced Council Tax Base. The rest of the income (£12,930) is from other sources such as funding bids, VAT reclaim etc. There is approximately £31,500 of un-ringfenced reserves going forward (plus committed spend of £105,000 for Albert Street play area, Village CCTV, Leddys Field phase 4 tree work and the Butchers Arms Car park.

A total amount of £155,735 was spent as follows:

£33783	(21.7%) play area (investment in new equipment)
£31368	(20.1%) on staffing costs (inc on costs)
£25692	(16.5%) play area (maintenance)
£24833	(15.9%) on bus subsidy
£9805	(6.3%) on VAT
£9071	(5.8%) office administration
£6350	(4.1%) on misc. including Christmas decorations, CCTV, bunting, unadopted land, speed signs and posts, newsletters and postcards (coronavirus), remembrance day parade
£6174	(4%) donations to community groups and other S137 activities
£2750	(1.8%) Seats, bus shelters, notice boards and grit bins (parish)
£2879	(1.8%) on wildlife areas (maintenance)
£1200	(0.8%) Chair's allowance
£965	(0.6%) parish allotments
£825	(0.5%) on legal fees for the car park leases
£40	(0.03%) parish bowling greens

The coming year (2020/21) will see no increase per week (currently £60.83 Band D Council Tax) to the Precept. More information can be found on the Parish Council website – www.audleyparishcouncil.org

Audley Rural Parish Council
April 2020