



AUDLEY RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT FOR ACTIVITIES IN 2021/22

Audley Rural Parish Council consists of fifteen ward councillors and a Parish Clerk, at the time of writing (April 2022) the Parish Councillors are the following. An election is due to take place on 5th May 2022 which will see a number of changes for the forthcoming year.

Audley Ward	Councillor	Mrs Valerie Pearson
	Councillor	Mrs Catherine Richardson
	Councillor	Mrs Michelle Toft (co-opted Aug 21)
	Councillor	Ms Anna Borowski Baskeyfield
Bignall End	Councillor	Mr Nick Hayes (Chair)
	Councillor	Mr Deane Jervis (Vice Chair)
	Councillor	Mr David Butler
	Councillor	Mr Daniel Keen (co-opted Oct 20)
	Councillor	Mr Nick Crisp (co-opted Oct 18)
Halmer End	Councillor	Ms Josie Leydon (co-opted Oct 20)
	Councillor	Mr Rob Moody (co-opted Sept 19)
	Councillor	Mr Mike Joynson
	Councillor	Mr Ron Garlick
	Councillor	Mr Chris C Cooper
	Councillor	Mr Ian Rowley (co-opted Oct 20)
Parish Clerk		Mrs Clare Withington

The Parish Council A.G.M takes place in May each year. In May 2021, Mr Nick Hayes was appointed as the Chair and Mr Deane Jervis as the Vice Chair. 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. This year we returned to physical meetings, after holding meetings remotely due to Covid-19. Mrs Nicola Myatt resigned at the start of the year and Mrs Michelle Toft was co-opted in August 2021.

County and Borough Council Representation

The Parish is represented at Staffordshire County Council by Cllr Ian Wilkes and at Newcastle Borough Council by Cllr Bert Proctor, Cllr Sue Moffatt and Cllr Ian Wilkes. Borough and Parish Council Elections are due to be held in May 2022.

Planning applications

Throughout the year, the Parish Council receives planning applications for consultation. The Parish 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 2021 and March 2022 – the Parish Council have commented on 81 applications. Where considered necessary some 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 was aborted in November 2020 with a new Borough Local Plan agreed instead. The first stage (Issues and Options) of the Borough Council's new Local Plan was consulted on from 1st November 2021 and extended until 24th January 2022. The Parish Council submitted a response. The next stage will see the new housing and employment sites identified and are most likely to see some development in the Green Belt within the Parish. Following the Parish Council decision to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish, a group of volunteers formed to start

the process to develop it. This is now well underway with an expected timescale of Summer 2022 for the Draft Neighbourhood Plan. 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 23. The Parish Council manage the Halmer End Harrison Close site, with all 21 plots let and a waiting list of 7. A smaller number of plots were terminated this year due to being unworked showing there is stability now with all plots used to their full potential. New fencing and an improved pathway were installed at Halmer End Allotments. A hedge was also laid at Audley Allotments to help sustain it for the future.

Grant Applications and donations

Contributions towards the Newcastle Food bank has continued with approx. 2300 (993.4 kg) meals donated by Audley Parish and taken on to Tesco by the Parish Council. A subsidised community transport service “Door 2 Door” received further funding of £1000 to help vulnerable people access transport who would otherwise not be able to. Since the scheme started, a total of 84 journeys have been completed for people with most journeys being for medical appointments.

This year the Parish Council supported the following groups which contributes to Parish life overall:

- Audley Millennium Green £1000 towards maintenance

Following the launch of the grant programme in December 2020 to fund small applications from the community groups, grants were awarded to:

- Leddys Field Supporters Group £300 towards a strimmer
- North Staffs Ramblers Association £300 towards materials for styles
- Wood Lane Cricket Club £300 towards an outdoor heater

Parish Council Notice Boards and Website

There are eight notice boards containing the latest Parish Council information across the Parish. The website has been viewed approx. 53,500 times during the year. Standard information about the Parish Council is also published in Audley Community News (Facebook group) and through local social media groups.

Village Car Parks

The Parish Council took on the project of the Butchers Arms car park at the end of 2020. Despite submitting the planning application in June 2021 planning permission was finally obtained in January 2022 to resurface it. Work started in March and was completed in May 2022 – the refurbishment has cost around £65k including fees. Another site is also still being explored under a lease arrangement with the Borough Council to create further opportunities for off road parking, subject to affordability.

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. Following the relaxation of Government restrictions due to Covid-19, the play areas were reinstated fully. 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 continues to be a problem although it has improved thanks to the responsible dog owners. 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. The scheme for £60k new play equipment for Albert Street was installed early in the spring of 2021 and has been a success.

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 2024.

Report from the Audley Parish Bowling Green Club:

"Our membership comprises 95% senior citizens and we pride ourselves in not only organizing Bowling as a pleasure in itself, but at the same time providing leisurely but necessary exercise for people who are no longer 21! Hopefully the Covid cloud is lifting and we have made improvements for the 2022 season. With the cooperation of the Parish Council we have uprated the Green, Pavilion and club premises, and these, together with our promotional efforts have been rewarded this year with nine new members - we now have over 50. This has meant that we can continue to run eight competitive teams in the Newcastle and Stoke on Trent area, which cannot help but engender community spirit in the village".

Public Seats, Bus Shelters, Grit Bins

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. We have also installed a further 7 grit bins and will keep them topped up with grit (16 in total) to help keep the Parish moving in bad weather.

Leddy's Field and Bluebell Wood, Alsagers Bank

Leddy's Field wildlife area continues to provide a much needed sanctuary for both wildlife and residents to enjoy being outdoors. The Leddys Field Supporters Group are continuing with their fantastic work and have been working with the local High School students too. Bluebell Wood continues to be monitored for any future work that is required.

Margaret's Garden, Church Street

Mrs Valerie Pearson continues to maintain this area with the help of volunteers, and it provides a lovely feature for the centre of the village.

CCTV

The CCTV cameras have assisted the police with their investigations. Around £600 spent as a result of ASB/criminal damage to Parish owned assets. A number of incidents have occurred over the last year with the Police receiving footage to help with their investigations. 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. Further investment is being made at Halmer End play area, to provide CCTV.

Annual Awards

The Parish Council annually awards three trophies, this year they will be awarded in May 2022:

R. W Edwards Community Award – In May it will be awarded to the staff at Wells Pharmacy Audley for their services to the community to help Parish's vulnerable and elderly during the pandemic.

Capewell Naylor Trophy for Services to the Environment – In May it will be awarded to Mr Ian Rowley, Chair of the Leddys Field Support Group for the amazing work at Leddys Field.

Elsie Kelsall Young Persons Award – In May it will be awarded Mr Ollie Machin, who has been a great help in making our Parish planters look brighter and tidier. Ollie is also encouraging other young people to take up an interest in gardening.

Vehicle Activated Signs and Speed Indicator Devices

The Parish Council have now installed 9 speed indicator devices at key areas across the Parish in order to slow the traffic and gather vehicle quantity & speed statistics. So far these seem to be working well and the Police have used the data to review the hotspots.

Parish Finances for 2021/22

A total income of £191,835.98 was received. This consisted of the Precept £157503 and a grant of £4,397 for the reduced Council Tax Base. The rest of the income (£34,332.98) is from other sources such as funding bids, grants, VAT reclaim etc. There is approximately £37,388 of un-ringfenced reserves going forward (plus committed spend of £105,688 for Butchers Arms Car park and other projects).

A total amount of £201,253.58 was spent as follows:

£50,539.63	25.1%	Play area (investment in new equipment)
£32,989.52	16.4%	Staffing costs (inc on costs)
£23,682.89	11.8%	Bus subsidy
£17,263.72	8.6%	VAT
£15,958.83	7.9%	Special Projects (inc Xmas lights, CCTV, Community Transport)
£15,715.48	7.8%	Play area (maintenance)
£9,089.83	4.5%	Maintenance and fees for the car parks
£8,825.96	4.4%	Office administration costs including insurance
£6,245.00	3.1%	Parish allotments
£4,751.50	2.4%	Wildlife areas (maintenance)
£4,608.00	2.3%	Donations to community groups and other S137 activities
£2,922.87	1.5%	Highways Speed devices
£2,454.01	1.2%	Misc. spend – unadopted land and other Parish assets eg Grit bins
£1,881.74	0.9%	Neighbourhood Plan Grant
£1,728.34	0.9%	Seats, bus shelters, notice boards and grit bins (Parish)
£1,200.00	0.6%	Chair's allowance
£896.00	0.4%	Parish Grants Programme
£435.00	0.2%	Footpaths
£65.26	0.0%	Parish bowling green (Audley)

The coming year (2022/23) will see a small increase of 5.46% to the Precept (previously £61.77) now £65.14 per year for Band D Council Tax. More information can be found on the Parish Council website – www.audleyparishcouncil.org

*Mr Nick Hayes
Audley Rural Parish Council
April 2022*