

There about 2,500 residents and about 1,025 properties in Audlem Parish; most of us love living here, are proud of our village. Audlem has a reputation for being a lively, attractive and community-minded village. This has not happened by accident. It is due to the amazing efforts made by our many volunteers who give freely of their time and expertise through the many organisations in the village such as ADAS, ASET, ADCA, ADAPT and many others.

APC is at the core of the voluntary activities in the village, working alongside the village organisations, supporting them where appropriate out of public funds. The Parish Council also makes decisions on behalf of the community, manages the local assets and services and supports efforts to improve the quality of life in the parish.

The Council's regular responsibilities are to make decisions on a wide range of issues affecting the community, helping to make Audlem be the village of which we are so proud. The Council

- responds to planning proposals and highways issues
- manages the village assets and open spaces (ranging from the Buttermarket, conservation area land, benches, and of course Turnpike Field)
- helps and supports local groups, campaigns for better services and facilities
- represents the village in consultations with Cheshire East, the police, the health authority.

In addition to the ongoing responsibilities of working with and overseeing our staff, managing the village assets, monitoring our infrastructure, working with community groups, we have drawn up a number of objectives which will form the framework of future activities for APC:-

- Ensuring the Council's financial security
- Improving the village environment for our youth
- Proactively campaigning for improvements to our highways
- Tackling crime



# AUDLEM PARISH COUNCIL

## Newsletter



**The primary purpose of this newsletter is to explain to residents why Audlem Parish Councillors wish to register Turnpike Field with Fields in Trust (FIT). Ownership and maintenance of the field will remain with the Parish Council. Registering Turnpike Field through a Deed of Dedication will ensure that it remains free from development in perpetuity, unless in the future a majority vote of the community reverses this.**

**This is your opportunity to have your say. There is a voting slip on the final page which can be torn off, completed and placed in the ballot box in Williams' Newsagents. Should you require them, additional copies of the voting slip are also available at Williams'. Alternatively, you can vote online via the Parish Council's website <https://www.audlempc.co.uk/> where there is a heading on the menu bar. The last date for voting is 11th April 2023.**

**The newsletter is also updating residents on other significant issues, but more detailed information can be found on the Parish Council website see [audlempc.co.uk](http://audlempc.co.uk)**

### Contents – Turnpike

- Background – page 1
- Fields in Trust – page
- Why register with FIT? – page
- Uses – page
- Projects – page
- Costs – page
- Car Park – page

### Contents – Other

- APC Finances: Police Investigation – page
- APC Finances: Budget – page
- Highways Problems – page
- Looking Forward – page

Turnpike Field Voting Slip – page

### JUST A REMINDER - Parish Council Elections

Parish Council elections take place on May 4th. All current Councillors have to stand down and seek re-election. Should you wish to stand for election to one of the 12 posts, you have until 4pm on 4th April to submit your application to Cheshire East. Details can be found on their website.

### VOTING SLIP (mark only one box with an X)

- I agree that Turnpike Field should be registered with Fields in Trust
- I do not agree that Turnpike Field should be registered with Fields in Trust

I confirm that I am a resident of Audlem Parish and registered on the Electoral Roll

Name .....

Address .....

Should there be other members of your household who are eligible to vote, additional voting slips are available at Williams' Newsagents.

**Please place completed voting slip in the ballot box at Williams' Newsagents. The last date for voting is April 11th 2023.**

### Turnpike Field Background

In early April 2018, Parish Councillors became aware of the auction of the 11.5 acre field. Public meetings were quickly held to obtain residents' opinion about the possible purchase. The meetings explained what would be the effect on the Audlem Parish Council (APC) Council Tax of taking out a loan to purchase the field. These meetings, together with an online survey, produced an overwhelming vote in favour of APC bidding to purchase the field in order to keep this as an area of community open space in perpetuity. There was also the added benefit of potentially being able to use part of the field to provide extra car parking to relieve parking pressure in the village centre.

APC's bid was successful and on 31st August 2018, the field became the property of the village. A 40-year loan was taken out with the Public Work Loans Board at the fixed rate of 2.82%.



## Fields in Trust (FIT)

FIT is an independent charity with over 90 years' experience of protecting parks and green spaces in perpetuity for future generations to enjoy. It does this by working in partnership with landowners to protect land through a Deed of Dedication. This is a binding legal agreement that sets out what the landowner can and can't do without consulting FIT. See [www.fieldsintrust.org](http://www.fieldsintrust.org) for more information.

### Why register with FIT?

To ensure that the field:

- is never developed for housing
- remains a village asset in perpetuity for future generations to use
- remains a green space, therefore contributing to offset global warming
- becomes a hub for village events
- becomes a diverse habitat for wildlife



### Uses of Turnpike Field

The field is used for a variety of activities, all of which are permitted within the Deed of Dedication:

- community events
- educational purposes, such as wildlife appreciation, bird watching and safaris
- wildlife areas
- picnics
- walking and jogging
- art
- dog walking
- car parking and camping for village events

In addition, there is a public footpath (FP26) which runs through the field.

## Projects

Soon after the field was purchased, temporary pedestrian access from Shropshire Street was created and picnic benches and seats installed. Since then, a number of projects have either been, or are in the pipeline to be, carried out. These are carried out by volunteers and have so far been funded by grants from outside organisations, donations from village groups and residents or work carried out by residents. This has enabled improvements to the field to be carried out at no cost to APC. These are:

- installing a boardwalk on FP26 where the footpath tended to become boggy in very wet conditions and difficult to use
- creating two ponds
- erecting a pond dipping platform
- moving the field gate at the entrance on Green Lane further back into the field to make access and egress safer
- erecting a notice board in the field



### Costs of owning Turnpike Field

The ongoing costs of Turnpike Field are:

- repayment of loan - £10,464 pa (19p per week Band D)
- tree inspections and tree work
- maintenance such as grass and hedge cutting
- general repairs to items in the field
- specific projects – usually covered by grants or donations

## Car Park

When the field was purchased, the intention was – and still is, to create a 'green' car park in order to relieve parking pressures in the village centre (subject to planning permission). The Deed of Dedication does not include the area at the northern end of the field where the car park is proposed.

### APC Finances - Police Investigation

As many residents are aware, the Parish Council is facing financially challenging times. In July 2022, it became apparent that approximately £163,000 appeared to have been fraudulently removed from the Council's bank account leaving it virtually empty. Most of this large balance had been earmarked for the proposed car park at Turnpike Field.

APC employed a forensic accountant to investigate, and notified the Police and Santander Bank who are all engaged in attempting to ascertain what has happened to the funds. We are still awaiting the outcome of their investigations and have asked the Financial Ombudsman to investigate the reason for the delay. We are in regular contact with the police, pressing for a resolution, but still have no indication how long that will take.

### APC Finances – Budget 2023/24

We have prepared a budget for the 2023/24 financial year which can be found on the APC website at [audlempc.co.uk/Information/Recent APC News/APC Budget 23/24](http://audlempc.co.uk/Information/Recent-APC-News/APC-Budget-23/24)

Calculation of the precept is explained on the website [audlempc.co.uk/Information/Recent APC News/APC Precept](http://audlempc.co.uk/Information/Recent-APC-News/APC-Precept)

As explained, the increase in the precept is for one year only – it will revert to a 'normal' level in 2024/25. In addition, if and when any money is recovered, this will be reflected by a reduction in the precept the following year.



### Highways Problems

There is no doubt that highways are a major issue for the residents of Audlem, eg:

- dangerous potholes
- parking issues
- poor crossing provisions near the school
- the size of modern commercial vehicles being way beyond the design limits of the original major roads that cross at Audlem.

Then, of course, there are the moats that develop at Swanbach and Corbrook pretty much every time it rains.

The matter of highways around Audlem is not a simple one and there will be no magical overnight solution. But APC is pushing as hard as it can to persuade Cheshire East to provide a better service to the residents of Audlem.

Please would you consider writing to your Local Ward Councillor, Rachel Bailey at [cllr.Rachel.Bailey@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.Rachel.Bailey@cheshireeast.gov.uk) or even your MP Edward Timpson at [edward.timpson.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:edward.timpson.mp@parliament.uk) with your concerns. More information can be found on our website [audlempc.co.uk/information/recent APC news/Audlem Highways](http://audlempc.co.uk/information/recent-APC-news/Audlem-Highways)

