



Newbold Astbury cum Moreton Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting, Wednesday 13 November 2024

Astbury Village Hall at 7.00 pm

Present:

- Councillor J Critchlow
- Councillor N Plant
- Councillor T Potts
- Councillor M Bailey
- Councillor P Critchlow
- Councillor N Barton
- Councillor P Cliff
- Councillor C Sutton
- Councillor B Jelf
- Councillor A Banks
- Councillor I Parry (arrived 7.20pm)
- Councillor L Wardlaw (Ward Councillor)
- Mr C Evans (Clerk)

Declarations of Interest

- Cllr P Critchlow for daffodil bulb payment.

Part 1 – Public and press Forum

No press or members of the public were present.

154/24 - Apologies:

The Council **resolved** to accept Councillor apologies for the following reasons:

- Councillor S Harrop, (travel delays)

155/24 Minutes

The Council **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 09 October 2024 are a true and accurate record.

156/24 – Ward Councillor Report

Cllr Wardlaw informed the Council that she had approached Cheshire East Highways about using the Ward Member Budget Scheme to finance part of the costs of siding out along the A34 but was still awaiting a substantive response. As part of Cheshire East's Medium Term Financial Strategy they are looking into full cost recovery for elections from 2027 and charging parish councils for any associated services they might provide.

157/24 - Accounts

The Council discussed and **resolved** to approve the accounts (**see Annex 1 for details**).

158/24 - Neighbourhood Plan

Chair J Critchlow informed the meeting that an examiner had been appointed to consider the draft plan, he had raised some questions and the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group had responded. The Chair will give a further update at the January meeting.

159/24 - Clerk's salary increase

The Council noted that the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) had agreed on new pay rates applicable from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 and confirmed that this increase should be implemented as soon as possible.

The Clerk is currently at spine point 22. The agreement will mean an increase in salary from £16.30ph to £16.93ph, backdated to April 2024.

160/24 - Budget and Precept for FY 25/26

The Council discussed the precept for 25/26. The Clerk ran through the Council's outturn for last FY, spend to date this year, a forecast for the rest of the FY and an indicative budget for 25/26. The likely cost of installing a new SID and replacing the phone box at Ackers Crossing would mean a much smaller than usual carry-over into next year. As well as the precept, additional sources of funding would be needed to cover possible projects such as the costs of siding out along the full length of the A34.

The Council noted that it had managed to hold the precept at the same level for several years during the cost of living crisis despite costs increasing due to inflation. However it would not be possible to do the same next year especially since non-discretionary items such as insurance, audit and staff costs are increasing budgetary pressure.

After discussion the Council **resolved** to request a precept of £22,000 based on the budget put forward by the Clerk. The Council further **resolved** not to commit to siding out the A34 unless and until additional funding was secured. Although this level of precept represents a sizeable increase in percentage terms it is still less than £1.70 per month extra per household. And unlike the Council Tax more generally, all of this additional money would be spent in the parishes.

161/24 – Planning Applications

24/3662C – Mildmay Farm, Mow Lane CW123NH

Removal of condition 5 on application 22/2519C - Variation of Condition 2 on approval 08/1946/FUL for change of use from agriculture to keeping of horses for private use and grazing of cattle and sheep, alteration and extension of existing buildings to form stables etc.

The Council **resolved** to object to this application, noting that the original planning approval was conditional on the premises being used for domestic purposes only, and a subsequent application seeking change of use had been refused. This latest change of use application is also contrary to the Astbury Neighbourhood Plan Policy P8.

162/24 - Remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings

The Councillors agreed to respond to the Government survey individually, rather than collectively.

163/24 – Congleton Town Neighbourhood Plan Consultation

The Councillors agreed to respond to the consultation individually, not collectively.

164/24 - Policies to Review

The Council reviewed its Grievance Policy and **resolved** to make no changes at this time.

165/24 - Councillor Training

The Clerk confirmed that he had arranged some group training on planning which would be delivered at the Council's meeting on 12th February 2025, starting at 7pm.

166/24 - Highways

No specific matters were raised though Councillors noted that they were still hoping that CEH would propose extending speed limits around the village.

167/24 – Common Land

Chair J Critchlow reported on the meeting at the Common Land with the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The area is currently very overgrown and the CWT had offered a few suggestions, but advised that the site is not suitable as a school resource.

One option is to keep the edges of the paths clear by strimming the nettles regularly, planting some rowan, hazel and elder to complement the large trees and the whips which have established, and topping the hedge only to encourage side growth. The hedge could then be laid in 8-9 years time.

A quicker option would be to reinstate the paths and trim and spray the nettles more generally several times per season. Some medium size trees could be planted, more densely planted whips and more glades created.

The back of the site should be kept as it is but otherwise the aim would be to create a managed woodland. The Council will discuss this again in the New Year.

168/24 Chairman and Members' Reports

Cllrs noted that more daffodils had been planted as agreed and poppies placed around the parishes in time for Remembrance Day. The next newsletter should issue next week. Councillors **resolved** to purchase a replacement plaque (in the region of up to £80) for the oak tree at Ackers Crossing and asked Cllr P Critchlow to look into this. Cllrs had reported several more instances of fly-tipping, some of which had been dealt with.

169/24 Clerk's Report

No further report as items had already been discussed earlier in the agenda.

The Meeting closed at 2105 hrs

Annex 1 - Accounts

Bank Balance as of **01 November 2024: £24,422.79**

The Council **noted** the following receipts since 1 October 2024:

- £nil

The Council **resolved** to approve the following payments:

- £24.00 – Cllr Critchlow for additional daffodil bulbs

The Council **noted** the following payments since 1 October 2024:

- £69.12 – TCS Management payroll services
- £49.59 – NEST, Clerk pension
- £96.00 – Parish Online subscription
- £183.00 – Clerk's SLCC subscription
- £204.00 – Cllr Critchlow daffodil bulb purchase
- £425.00 – Clerk's PAYE
- £150.00 – Shona Amies, website services
- £564.33 – Clerk Salary
- £252.00 – PKF Littlejohn, External Auditor

X

Chairman