



Astley Village Parish Council

Annual Meeting of the Council

7 May 2025 at 6.30pm

Present

Councillor Gillian Sharples (Chair) in the Chair; Councillor John McAndrew (Vice-Chair); Councillor Chris Sheldon.

322.01 Election of the Chair of the Parish Council

RESOLVED – That Councillor Gillian Sharples be elected Chair of the Parish Council until the next Annual Council Meeting.

Councillor Sharples signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took the Chair.

Councillor Sharples in the Chair

322.02 Appointment of Vice Chair of the Parish Council

RESOLVED – That Councillor John McAndrew be elected Vice Chair of the Parish Council until the next Annual Council Meeting.

322.03 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Keith Ashton, Elaine Bibby, Neil Forkin and Ian Thomas.

322.04 Declarations of Interest

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

Councillor John McAndrew declared a Personal Interest as a Governor at Buckshaw Primary School and a Pecuniary interest as a member of the Friends of Astley Park.

322.05 Public Engagement

Members of the public are invited to put questions/make representations to the members of the Parish Council.

The Parish Clerk reported that a resident had complained that a wooden pallet from the bin store near the West Way Sports Hub had been smashed resulting in nails being visible if which this could cause injury. The item of equipment with the slide had been vandalised and sharp metal edges on display. There were plastic bottles everywhere and during a recent visit with her granddaughter a large group of youths had been hanging around the play area which she had found intimidating.

In addition, the sleepers at the Buckshaw School end of the underpass had been smashed and bricks had been broken up and smashed.

Two residents expressed their concerns regarding the state of the West Way Nature Reserve (the Buckshaw Pond and the Turtle Pond) and in particular the litter and debris especially Buckshaw pond. One of the residents stated that they would clean it themselves using a dinghy or strapping themselves to a tree to clear the pond as the reeds had lots of litter caught in them. They mentioned that there was no litter bin around the pond areas and the decking over the turtle pond had two of the boards burned and needed replacing. They also suggested that the new interpretation boards could have included additional information including the medicinal benefits have the plants growing in the area.

Councillor Jean Sherwood gave assurances that she would refer the issues for urgent investigation and advised the resident that they should not attempt to clean the ponds themselves.

Concern was also expressed at the general untidiness around Clough Acre and the wooden steps and rails leading to the properties were in need of repair. It was suggested that the bins near Great Meadow were often full and needed emptying more often.

Following the Parish Council funding the cost of a new recycling bin outside the shops at Hallgate the three bins that were originally adjacent to the community centre had been removed. Parish Councillors stated that it had been intended that the new recycling bin was in addition to the existing bins not to replace them.

The broken pallet had been taken. The padlock had been broken off and has now been repaired.

322.06 Borough/County Councillor Reports

Reports from Chorley North and Astley Ward Borough Councillors and County Councillor Aidy Riggott.

Councillor Jean Sherwood, Borough and County Councillor Aidy Riggott attended the meeting.

Councillor Sherwood reported that although a site visit had not taken place with Places for People for some time, there appeared to have been a significant improvement to the landscaping and maintenance of the area and a lot of the previous issues raised with Places for People had been addressed.

It was noted that the community skip would be available on Saturday 24 May 2025 between 9am and 12 noon at the Hallgate Car Park to help residents dispose of unwanted household items to help keep the local area clean and safe.

The Parish Council congratulated County Councillor Aidy Riggott on being re-elected to Lancashire County Council on 1 May 2025.

RESOLVED – That the reports be noted.

322.07 Minutes

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 5 March 2025 (copies of which had been circulated) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

322.08 Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation

The Parish Clerk submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) inviting the Parish Council to consider/review the Parish Council's:

- Standing Orders.
- Financial Regulations.
- Scheme of Delegation.

It was reported that the Personnel Committee at its meeting held on 20 November 2024 had agreed "that in future a sub group of the Personnel Committee should undertake an annual appraisal for the Parish Clerk and the Parish Council be recommended to amend the Terms of Reference of the Personnel Committee to read:

4. Annual Appraisals

A sub-group of the Personnel Committee will undertake an annual appraisal for the Parish Clerk and the Clerk will undertake an annual appraisal for the Village Caretaker and any other staff employed by the Parish Council. The Personnel Committee will receive a report outlining the outcome of the annual appraisals undertaken. The Personnel Committee will consider any issues raised."

RESOLVED - That the Parish Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation be confirmed including the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference of the Personnel Committee to reflect the recommendation of the Personnel Committee.

322.09 Appointment of Committees, Membership, Terms of Reference

The Parish Clerk submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) inviting the Parish Council to consider the Appointment of Committees, Membership, Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED - (1) That the following members be appointed to the Personnel Committee:

Councillor Chris Sheldon (Chair).
Councillor Keith Ashton.
Councillor Matt Lynch.
Councillor John McAndrew (Ex-officio).

(2) That the following Working Parties be established, and the following Councillors be appointed to them:

General Purposes Working Group

Councillor Keith Ashton.
Councillor Neil Forkin.
Councillor John McAndrew.
Councillor Ian Thomas.

Village Development Working Group

Councillor Keith Ashton.
Councillor Elaine Bibby.
Councillor Neil Forkin.
Councillor Chris Sheldon.
Councillor Ian Thomas.

322.10 Appointment of Council Representatives on Outside Bodies

RESOLVED – That the following Councillors be appointed to represent the Parish Council on the following Outside Bodies:

- Chorley Liaison – Councillor Gillian Sharples.
- Neighbourhood Area Meeting (NW Parishes and Chorley North) - Councillor Gillian Sharples (Substitute Councillor John McAndrew).

322.11 Parish Clerk Report

The Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on ongoing projects, work outstanding and activities since the last meeting of the Parish Council. In particular the following issues were discussed:

Proposed Improvements to the Chancery Road Underpass

It was reported that Bryan Lee Builders had stated that Chorley Borough Council had not requested them to quote for any work on the Buckshaw Primary School side of the underpass including cutting back the overgrown vegetation and generally cleaning up the area together with the replacing the rotten sleepers with

new sleepers and the painting of the handrails and the quotes they had provided was only for work to Hallgate side of the underpass. It was noted that the Parish Council had on three occasions asked them to confirm that the work quoted for, was for both sides of the underpass and no response to the contrary had been received. They had now provided the following additional quotes and stated that they would remove the bricks and tidy the landscaped area as a good will gesture.

- Replace sleepers and replace with new- £2,340.05 + VAT
- Prep and paint handrails apply two coats of black metal paint- £1,410.15 + VAT.

Councillor Sheldon had met the contractor on site on Wednesday 19 March 2025 to discuss a way forward and to replace the missing bricks and rake and repoint various sections as discussed at the site meeting would cost £594.20. Since the meeting had taken place and the quotes provided, as referred to earlier in the meeting under the Public Engagement item, there had been further damage to the brickwork and it was suggested that a further site meeting should take place by the contractor to enable them to confirm the quotation previously provided.

Proposed planting at the Astley Village Garden of Reflection

It was reported that five local landscape firms had been invited to provide quotes based on the specification approved by the Parish Council, but no quotes had been received. Pole Green Nurseries Ltd and Rivington View Nursery had been requested to provide quotes for the purchase the plants directly by the Parish Council but had stated that they were not able to provide the plants in the specification due to seasonal factors and the specific requirements identified such as the height of the plants.

Hartwood Maintenance and DWG (NW) Limited had been invited to provide a quote to undertake the groundwork with the option of also purchasing and planting the plants as in the specification at the Astley Village Garden of Reflection. DWG (NW) Limited had quoted £885 to carry out all groundworks and planting as per specification with the plants being supplied by the Parish Council and £1,175.00 to undertake the groundworks and purchase and plant the plants as per the specification. Hartwood Maintenance had also expressed an interest in carrying out the work and had asked if a representative from the Parish Council could meet them on site so he can provide an exact figure on price.

Installation of Christmas Tree Lights

It was reported that Richard Ryan had been requested to provide the cost to:

- Arrange for the Christmas Tree pruned/shaped and if necessary, extend the existing fencing at the base of the tree.
- Once the existing bollard is replaced with a new drop-down bollard, access the site via a cherry picker so that the existing lights can be removed to avoid the lights remaining on the tree and in November each year dress the tree and if necessary, add fresh lights to match existing style and type.
- PATest the lights annually prior to the Parish Council Carol Singing Event and switch on the lights on at the Carol Singing Event.

Two options had been proposed:

OPTION 1 - Prune/shape the tree and replace all lighting

- Trim tree £450.00 (to trim this tree keeping this shape down to around 10-20% less than now).
- Materials £740.00 (using exact type of lights you have now from same supplier).
- Labour £ 1,055.00 (inc. careful removal of existing strings)
Total cost £2,695 plus VAT.

OPTION 2 – Don't trim tree but replace all lighting

- Materials £1,065.00 (using exact type of lights you have now from same supplier).
- Labour £1,360.00 (inc. careful removal of existing strings).
Total cost £2,425 plus VAT (plus extending the existing fencing at the base of the tree).

Proposed Introduction of Car Parking Charges on Hallgate Car Park

It was reported that Chorley Borough Council had confirmed:

- There will be free parking for 1 hour.
- Parking permits will be available through MiPermit, a business permit can be created if required.
- There will be an additional 5 disabled bays created.
- It is proposed that the parking machines should accept card and cash payments.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the following expenditure approved by the Parish Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 16.2 be noted:

- Post Office Counters Ltd – Postage £6.80.
- Chorley Council - New Recycling Waste Bin £785.90.
- Post Office Counters Ltd – Postage £2.10.
- ICO - Annual Registration £52.00.
- Microsoft - Microsoft 365 Personal £84.99.

(3) That approval be given to the following work at the underpass by Bryan Lee Builders:

- Replace sleepers and replace with new - £2,340.05 + VAT
- Prepare and paint handrails apply two coats of black metal paint - £1,410.15 + VAT.
- Replace the missing bricks at the Chancery Road Underpass and raking and repointing various sections as discussed on site by Bryan Lee Builders and Councillor Chris Sheldon at a cost £594.20 (including VAT) but that in view of the further damage to the brickwork, the contractor be requested to confirm the quotation previously provided and the Parish Clerk be authorised to approve any revised quote not exceeding £2,000 + VAT

- (4) That DWG (NW) Limited be requested to undertake all works at the Astley Village Garden of Reflection as per the specification supplied by the Parish Council (including supplying the plants) at a cost of £1,175.00.
- (5) That that Richard Ryan be requested to arrange for a specialist tree surgeon to prune/shape the Christmas tree and remove the existing lights and replace them with new multicoloured LED lights at a cost of £2,695 plus VAT including PATesting the lights annually prior to the Parish Council Carol Singing Event and switching on the lights at the Carol Singing Event.
- (6) That the Parish Clerk be requested to write to Chorley Brough Council informing them that as part of the proposed introduction of car parking charges on Hallgate car park, the Parish Council would wish to see free parking for 2 hours not 1 hour as proposed.
- (7) That the Parish Council should not have a stall at the 2025 Chorley Flower Show at that future attendance be reviewed at the September 2025 meeting.

322.12 Statutory Business

(i) Co-option to the Parish Council Vacancy

It was reported that Emma Barraclough had resigned as Parish Councillor with immediate effect on 7 May 2025.

The Parish Clerk reported that there had been no applications received for the vacancy on the Parish Council since the last meeting of the Parish Council.

RESOLVED –(1) The Parish Clerk be requested to invite expressions of interest to enable any applications to be considered at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

- (2) That the Parish Clerk be requested to arrange for the printing of the leaflet to be delivered to residents in Astley Village with the Winter Newsletter to try and recruit of more Parish Councillors.

(ii) Planning Issues Relevant to the Village

The Parish Clerk submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing details of planning issues relevant to the village.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

322.13 Financial Matters

(i) Financial Position

The Responsible Financial Officer submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) showing the financial position as at 22 April 2025.

RESOLVED – That the financial position be noted.

(ii) Payments to be Approved

The Responsible Financial Officer submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) recommending a list of invoices to be paid between 1 May 2025 and 30 June 2025 as follows:

Date	Creditor	Description	Total (£)	Vat (£)	Net (£)
09/05/25	Employee 4	Reimbursements (March 2025)	42.42		42.42
09/05/25	Employee 4	Reimbursements (April 2025)	43.82		43.82
01/05/25	Easy Web Sites	Monthly rental	76.56	12.89	63.67
23/05/25	Zoom	Zoom Subscription (May 2025)	15.59	2.60	12.99
15/05/25	Employee 4	Salary (May 2025)	414.90		414.90
15/05/25	HMRC	Tax (May 2025)	103.80		103.80
15/05/25	HMRC	National Insurance (May 2025)	0.00		0.00
01/06/25	Easy Web Sites	Monthly rental	76.56	12.89	63.67
23/06/25	Zoom	Zoom Subscription (June 2025)	15.59	2.60	12.99
13/06/25	Employee 4	Salary (June 2025)	414.90		414.90
13/06/25	HMRC	Tax (June 2025)	103.80		103.80
13/06/25	HMRC	National Insurance (June 2025)	0.00		0.00
			1,307.94	30.98	1,276.96

RESOLVED – That approval be given to the payments as detailed above.

(iii) Spend Against Budget Headings

The Responsible Financial Officer submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) inviting the Parish Council to review the spend against budget headings.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(iv) Insurance Policy Schedule and Policy Document

The Responsible Financial Officer invited to consider the renewal of the Parish Council insurance from 1 June 2025. A copy of the Insurance Policy Schedule and Policy Document (with details of the main changes to the updated policy wording) (copies of which had been circulated) were reviewed. The Premium for 2025/26 was £436.44 compared to £497.21 in 2024/25.

RESOLVED - The Parish Clerk be requested to renew the existing insurance cover with Zurich Municipal Insurance at a cost of £436.44.

(v) Internal Auditors Report and Statement of Accounts for 2024/25

RESOLVED – That the report and assurances provided by the Internal Auditor be noted.

(vi) Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

RESOLVED – As the members of Astley Village Parish Council we acknowledge our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025, that:

	Yes	No*	'Yes' means that this authority:	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.	
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.	
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.	
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.	
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.	
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.	
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.	
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.
			✓	

(vii) Annual Return for the Financial Year 2024/25

It was noted that the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer had certified that for the year ended 31 March 2025 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return had been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

RESOLVED – (1) That the following Accounting Statements 2024/25 for Astley Village Parish Council be approved as follows together with the explanation of any significant variances year on year in Section 2:

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	80,586	58,994	<i>Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	20,543	20,389	<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts	6,262	5,352	<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs	6,122	6,550	<i>Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments	42,275	9,784	<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward	58,994	68,401	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	58,994	68,401	<i>The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.</i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	31,702	32,002	<i>The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.</i>
10. Total borrowings	0	0	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>
For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓

(2) That in respect of the variances – (box 6) that in 2023/24 the explanation provided that the Parish Council had contributed to the Play area West Way Sports Hub of £30,000 which explained why the payments were significantly higher than in 2024/25 (a difference of £32,491) and the grant meant that the expenditure in 2024/25 was much higher than normal be endorsed.

322.14 Spring Newsletter 2025

The Parish Council discussed the Spring edition of the Parish Council Newsletter.

It was noted that it was hoped the newsletter would be printed the week commencing Monday 12 May 2025 and distributed from 22 May 2025 and the Parish Clerk should be notified of any comments/ suggested changes no later than noon on Thursday 8 May 2025.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

322.15 Annual Council Work Programme - Scheduled Items

The Parish Clerk invited the Parish Council to review and update the Annual Council Work Programme (Scheduled Items) (copies of which had been circulated).

RESOLVED – That the Annual Council Work Programme (Scheduled Items) be noted.

322.16 Environment Reports

Councillor Sheldon reported that a 'den' had been constructed in Judeland Wood between the Farthings and Long Copse including a fire pit. He had received a complaint from residents that trees had been cut down and damaged in the construction of the 'den' and although the structure had now been cleared by Chorley Borough Council, the damaged trees required attention.

322.17 Reports from Parish Council representatives on Other Bodies

Chorley Liaison

The Chair provided a report on the Chorley Liaison meeting held on 19 March 2025. A copy of the Agenda and Key Papers had been circulated for information.

Neighbourhood Area Meeting (NW Parishes and Chorley North)

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 22 July 2025 at 6.30pm.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That Councillor Chris Sheldon be requested to liaise with Chorley Borough Council in relation to the Neighbourhood Priority Scheme to upgrade the Path from Chancery Road, through Dam Head Wood to Astley Park so that the project can be progressed.

322.19 Correspondence

Correspondence received had been reported as part of the 'Parish Clerk Report' (Minute 322.11).

322.20 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Wednesday 2 July 2025 at 6.30 pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.05 pm.

Chair