



Astley Village Parish Council

Annual Meeting of the Council

1 May 2024 at 6.30pm

Present

Councillor Gillian Sharples(Chair) in the Chair; Councillor John McAndrew (Vice-Chair); Councillors Keith Ashton, Matt Lynch and Ian Thomas.

316.01 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

316.02 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.

316.03 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Emma Barraclough and Chris Sheldon.

316.04 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.

Councillor John McAndrew withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the application for funding from the Friends of Astley Park and took no part in the discussion or vote.

Councillor Ian Thomas declared a Personal Interest as a trustee of The Leyland and District Royal Air Forces Association Branch.

316.05 Public Engagement

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

No issues were raised.

316.06 Borough/County Councillor Reports

Reports from Chorley North and Astley Ward Borough Councillors and County Councillor (Lancashire County Council) (copies of which had been circulated) were considered. Borough Councillor Adrian Lowe, Borough and County Councillor Aidy Riggott attended the meeting.

Councillor Adrian Lowe reported that Chorley Borough Council had set a side funding to improve the public realm in Astley Village which could form part of the Parish Council initiative to undertake improvements to the Chancery Road underpass.

RESOLVED – That the reports be noted.

316.07 Minutes

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 6 March 2024 (copies of which had been circulated) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

316.08 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.

RESOLVED - That the Parish Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation be confirmed.

316.09 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 John McAndrew.
Councillor Ian Thomas
VACANCY.

Village Development Working Group

Councillor Keith Ashton.
Councillor Emma Barraclough.
Councillor Chris Sheldon.
Councillor Ian Thomas.

316.10 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).

316.11 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:

New Interpretation Boards at the West Way Nature Reserve

Lindsay Blackstock (Chorley Borough Council) attended the meeting and provided an update in relation to the proposed interpretation boards at the two entrances to the West Way Nature Reserve. Indicative designs of the interpretation boards were considered although it was acknowledged that the design and wording needed to be developed.

Proposed planting at the Astley Village Garden of Reflection

Lindsay Blackstock (Chorley Borough Council) attended the meeting and provided an update in relation to the proposed planting at the Astley Village Garden of Reflection. The Parish Council had allocated £2,000 for the financial year 2024/25 for the planting scheme although it was suggested that a planting scheme could be developed to be delivered over three years with the Parish Council allocating additional funding in future years.

It was acknowledged that the permission of Chorley Borough Council was required to undertake planting on their land and the future maintenance needed to be considered e.g. would this be undertaken by the Parish Council contractor.

As previously requested by the Parish Council, Jan Sanderson, a local resident was involved in developing the planting scheme and it was suggested that Buckshaw Primary School could be invited to be involved in the planting of the bulbs.

Friends of Astley Park(FoAP) - Bird Nest Boxes for Astley Park - Request for Funding

It was reported that Friends of Astley Park were currently looking to find a local school to take on the project of making 30 nest boxes, for which they would supply the timber and fittings. They had applied to the Parish Council for funding to cover the cost of materials (£300).

Chorley Flower Show

It was reported that the Chorley Flower Show will be taking place on 26, 27 and 28 July 2024 and applications for Community Groups were now open. The Parish considered the details of attending this year's flower show and it was agreed that the Parish Council would have a presence at the event on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 July.

Real Madrid Foundation Clinic - Friday 26 July 2024

At the last Parish Council Meeting on 6 March 2024, the Parish Clerk had been requested to write to the Headteacher at Buckshaw Primary School inviting them to suggest the criteria for deciding how the place sponsored by the Parish Council at the Real Madrid Foundation Clinic on Friday 26 July 2024 should be allocated to a young person living within the Astley Village Parish boundary. It was agreed that the criteria be considered at the next meeting of the Parish Council on 1 May 2024.

It was reported, that the Headteacher has put forward for this opportunity a girl in Year 6 class who was a very talented footballer and as well as representing school, has had trials for the district team.

It was proposed to offer the place sponsored by the Parish Council at the Real Madrid Foundation Clinic on Friday 26 July 2024 to the pupil suggested by the Headteacher at Buckshaw Primary School.

It was reported that Astley and Buckshaw Junior Football Club had approached the Parish Council as they would like to plant 20 trees to represent the 20-year anniversary and have asked if this would be possible somewhere in the village.

Proposed Improvements to the Chancery Road Underpass

At the last Parish Council Meeting on 6 March 2024, it was agreed that the proposed improvements to the Chancery Road underpass be discussed at the next Parish Council Meeting on 1 May 2024.

The Parish Clerk reminded the Parish Council that it had previously written to Lancashire County Council expressing the Parish Council's safety concerns regarding the Chancery Road Subway especially due to its increased use following the opening of the West Way Sports Hub, and requesting improvements to the lighting and that the walls are painted.

Lancashire County Council had confirmed that the underpass was around 13m long and the opening is 7m wide x 2.7m high and the revetments were splayed each side of the path.

They had stated that generally, painting the concrete surfaces of bridges was not something they encouraged and were unable to justify painting the revetments and concrete deck to the bridge. In addition, in their experience, a blank bright canvas of paint attracted the local graffiti artists, and the costs of overpainting would

escalate over time. They had visited the subway to check the subway lighting units and the two columns adjacent to the subway which they had found to be in full working order and adequate and therefore did not plan to make any changes to the subway at this time.



It was suggested that the Parish Council could discuss with Chorley Borough Council and Lancashire County Council proposals to improve the underpass which could be funded from the budget allocated as part of the 2024/25 financial year (£10,000) although there were other budgets which could also be used to support a comprehensive scheme.

It was suggested that improvements to the resident and visitor experience and encourage its use could include:

- The access and egress including the splayed revetments at each side of the path and the steps.
- A themed mural depicting and celebrating Astley Village (incorporating Astley Hall, West Way, the open spaces within the Village, the Nature Reserve etc.)
- Painting the outside of the underpass and the surrounding fencing.
- The lighting.
- The signage to the Village Centre, West Way Sports Hub and Astley Park.

Dangerous Parking in Astley Village

The Parish Council was reminded that at the Parish Council Meeting on 1 November 2023, it had been agreed that the Police be requested to provide an update to the January 2024 meeting of the Parish Council following their discussions with Lancashire County Council. The Parish Council considered whether to invite the Police to provide an update to a future meeting of the Parish Council and it was agreed to monitor the situation and whether it was necessary to pursue enforcement by the Police.

Astley Village - Radar Speed Signs

The Parish Clerk reported that a resident had contacted the Parish Council as the wires had been cut to the solar panel for the radar speed sign on Chancery Road (near Wymundsley) and it was just running on battery power.

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:

- Chorley Borough Council – Room Hire £90.00.
- ICO - Annual Registration £40.00.
- Microsoft - Microsoft 365 Personal £59.99.
- HMRC - Tax Due 2023/24 £95.79.
- Poppy Signs - "Happy to Chat" Signs for Benches £102.00

(3) That the indicative designs for the interpretation boards at the West Way Nature Reserve be noted and that the approval of the final design and design be delegated to the Parish Clerk following consultation with members of the Parish Council.

(4) That Lindsay Blackstock (Chorley Borough Council) be requested to present to the next meeting on 3 July 2024, a planting scheme for the Astley Village Garden of Reflection which could be delivered over a number of years following consultation with the Head of Streetscene and Waste at Chorley Borough Council.

(5) That a grant of £300 be made to the Friends of Astley Park towards their project to provide 30 nest boxes.

(6) That approval be given to allocating the place being sponsored by the Parish Council at the Real Madrid Foundation Clinic on Friday 26 July 2024 to the pupil suggested by the Headteacher at Buckshaw Primary School.

(7) That the Village Development Working Group be requested to invite representatives from Chorley Brough Council and Lancashire County Council to an initial site visit to discuss the suggested that improvements to the Chancery Road Underpass and develop a scheme for consideration by the Parish Council.

(8) That the Parish Clerk be requested to contact Pandora Technologies Ltd requesting them to repair the radar speed sign on Chancery Road (near Wymundsley).

316.12 Statutory Business

(i) Co-option to the Parish Council Vacancy

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 –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.

(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. The Parish Council had not been consulted on any planning application received by Chorley Borough Council since the last Parish Council Meeting on 6 March 2024.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

316.13 Financial Matters

(i) Financial Position

The Responsible Financial Officer submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) showing the financial position as at 15 April 2024.

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 2024 and 30 June 2024 as follows:

Date	Creditor	Description	Total (£)	Vat (£)	Net (£)
08/05/24	Employee 4	Reimbursements (March 2024)	44.20		44.20
08/05/24	Employee 4	Reimbursements (April 2024)	46.80		46.80
01/05/24	Easy Web Sites	Monthly rental	72.60	12.10	60.50
23/05/24	Zoom	Zoom Subscription (May2024)	15.59	2.60	12.99
15/05/24	Employee 4	Salary (May 2024)	391.80		391.80
15/05/24	HMRC	Tax (May 2024)	97.80		97.80
01/06/24	Easy Web Sites	Monthly rental	72.60	12.10	60.50
23/06/24	Zoom	Zoom Subscription (June 2024)	15.59	2.60	12.99
14/06/24	Employee 4	Salary (June 2024)	391.80		391.80
14/06/24	HMRC	Tax (June 2024)	97.80		97.80
			1,246.58	29.40	1,217.18

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 2023. 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 2024/25 was £497.21 compared to £487.32 in 2023/24.

RESOLVED - The Parish Clerk be requested to renew the existing insurance cover with Zurich Municipal Insurance at a cost of £497.21.

(v) Internal Auditors Report and Statement of Accounts for 2023/24

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

(vi) Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

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 2024, that:

	Yes	No*	<i>'Yes' means that this authority:</i>	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>	
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>	
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.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>	
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.	✓		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>	
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.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>	
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>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.</i>	
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>	
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.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	
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	<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>
			✓	

(vii) Annual Return for the Financial Year 2023/24

It was noted that the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer had certified that for the year ended 31 March 2024 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 – That the following Accounting Statements 2023/24 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 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	84,345	80,586	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.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	20,397	20,543	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	5,156	6,262	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	6,530	6,122	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.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority’s borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	22,782	42,275	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	80,586	58,994	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	80,586	58,994	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.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	31,702	31,702	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.
10. Total borrowings	0	00	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓
			The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
			The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

Section 2, Box 3: the variance from the prior year (2022/23) for this box is £1,106 which is above 15%.

With the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, schemes planned for 2020/21 and 2021/22 were able to be carried out in the financial year 2022/23 which meant the level of expenditure increased from the previous year which in turn affected the amount of VAT recovered (£1,250.78). The VAT recovered is claimed after 1 April each year and therefore not reflected in the accounts for the year it was accrued i.e., the £1,250.78 is shown as income in these accounts (2023/24). The amount of VAT recovered (to be recovered for 2023/24) for the last four years is as follows:

2020/21 - £761.68 shown as income in the 2021/22 Return.
2021/22 - £942.69 shown as income in the 2022/23 Return.
2022/23 - £1,250.78 shown as income in the 2023/24 Return.
2023/24 - £440.81 will be shown as income in the 2024/25 Return.

Section 2, Box 6: the variance from the prior year (2022/23) for this box is £19,493 which is above 15%.

With the lifting of restrictions in the financial year 2021/22, some of the work planned carried forward from 2021/22 was undertaken in 2022/23 e.g., West Way Nature Reserve (£5,000) and New Finger Post Signs (£1,373.00). This has meant that the expenditure in 2022/23 was much higher than normal.

Section 2, Box 7: the total reserves figure is more than twice Box 2. (i.e., £58,994...more than £41,086 being twice the Precept levied)

Below is a breakdown of the reserves held above £500:

- £613.69 - Office/Sundry.
- £1,000 - Employee Contingency (this was reduced from £2,000 in 2022/23).
- £6,811.22- Election/By-Election/Polls Reserve (this was increased from £5,000 to £7,000 in 2022/23 on the recommendation of the Returning Officer).
- £500 - Councillor Training.
- £1,901 - Grant Awards/Local Projects and Groups (increased from £2,000 in 2022/23 to £2,500).
- £4,480.08 - Village Improvements (Additional Seating & Footpath improvements).
- £1,000 - Improve Village Centre & Enhance Village Green.
- £500 - Tree Planting and Maintenance (reduced from £2,500 in 2022/23).
- £500 - Wildflower Meadows/Corridors.
- £10,000 - Astley Village Community Centre - Increase community use of the building*.
- £1,000 - Refurbishment of existing Gateway Signs (reduced from £2,000 in 2022/23).
- £500 - Wildflower Meadows/Corridors.
- £500 - Road Safety Maintenance of Speed Indicator Signs (reduced from £1,000 in 2022/23).
- £5,000 - Play area and path at West Way Sports Hub.
- £4952.86 - Improving Community Engagement and Raising the Profile of the Parish Council (increased from £1,500 in 2022/23 to £5,000).
- £18,864.07- General Reserve.

*It has now been confirmed that this scheme is unable to proceed, and the funding has been allocated to other projects in 2024/25.

316.14 Spring Newsletter 2024

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 6 May 2024 and distributed from 23 May 2024 and the Parish Clerk should be notified of any comments/ suggested changes no later than noon on Thursday 2 May 2024.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

316.15 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.

316.16 Environment Reports

It was reported that there was a significant amount of waste and litter at the rear of the Hallgate shops which was causing a health hazard.

It was suggested that the Parish Council remind The Astley Village Inn of their responsibility to maintain the areas they are responsible for, and this could be assisted by the installation of cigarette bin and outdoor ashtray.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Parish Clerk be requested to write to Chorley Borough Council (Environments Health) informing them of the significant amount of waste and litter at the rear of the Hallgate shops.

(2) That the Parish Clerk be requested to write to The Astley Village Inn to remind them of their responsibility to maintain the areas they are responsible for, and this could be assisted by the installation of cigarette bin and outdoor ashtray.

316.17 Reports from Parish Council representatives on Other Bodies

Chorley Liaison

The Chair provided a report on the Chorley Liaison meeting held on 20 March 2024. 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 Thursday 20 June 2024 at 6.30pm.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

316.19 Correspondence

Correspondence received had been reported as part of the 'Parish Clerk Report' (Minute 316.11).

316.20 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Wednesday 3 July 2024 at 6.30 pm.

The meeting concluded at 7.45 pm.

Chair