

# Acton Burnell, Frodesley, Pitchford, Ruckley & Langley Parish Council

## CLERK'S REPORT

### Parish Council Meeting 9 March 2021

#### 21.3.8 Finance

The Clerk notes that Parish Council expenditure has exceeded the budget for 2020/21. As of 4 March 2021, the PC has overspent the budget by 8%. Reasons for excess expenditure include:

- Change of Clerk leading to increased wage costs from paying two Clerks;
- additional hours paid to the Clerk due to restating the accounts for 2018/19;
- unanticipated PAYE costs due to clerk receiving pension;
- external audit costs due to CIL income previous financial year;
- repair to damaged defibrillator;
- and the purchase of a new laptop for the new Clerk.

Please see document prepared by Clerk entitled "Budget vs Expenditure 4 March 21" for a full outline of expenditure versus budget to date.

Where budget headings are overspent a Full Council resolution is required to make payments from this budget heading. Overspent budget heading with outstanding payments for 20/21 are staff wages and office supplies. The training budget will also go over budget if we receive all the outstanding invoices for this financial year.

Unspent and available amounts may be moved to other budget headings.

The Parish Council has sufficient reserves to cover the Clerk's anticipated overspend of the budget.

#### 21.3.9 Annual Parish Meeting

The PC is required to hold an Annual Parish Meeting this year before 30 June 2021. SALC has suggested holding the meeting before 6 May 2021 (when COVID legislation allowing virtual meetings expires) in order to be able to undertake a virtual rather than in person meeting, as people may still be uncertain about attending a public meeting in May. The Parish Council needs to decide when and where the meeting should take place, what format it should have and whether any particular preparation needs to be undertaken.

Pitchford Village Hall has requested that the future of the Village Hall be added as an agenda item for the Annual Parish Meeting.

#### 21.3.10 Parish Council Elections - 6 May 2021

Parish Council Elections are due to take place on 6 May 2021. Purdah will be in place from 15 March 2021.

Any person wishing to stand for election should complete Nomination Papers available from the Electoral Commission website:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/parish-council-elections-england>.

# Acton Burnell, Frodesley, Pitchford, Ruckley & Langley Parish Council

Nomination Papers must be returned in person. Shropshire Council will publish the Notice of Election on Monday 15 March 2021; this will contain all the dates, times and venues for the delivery of Nomination Papers.

The Clerk will undertake Elections training on 5 March 2021. The Parish Council will be invoiced for the cost of election in April 2022; no estimated cost will be given in advance.

## **21.3.11 Internal Audit**

The Clerk has received a questionnaire from the new Internal Auditor and requests that the Council take this opportunity to review its Internal Controls to ensure that everything is up to date ahead of the end of the Financial Year. A Councillor who is not the Chairman needs to be appointed to sign off Bank Reconciliation documents approved at Council meetings.

## **21.3.12.3 Other Planning Notices update**

Following the Clerk's request in January, the PC has not received any update on these notices and the Clerk has contacted the Planning Enforcement team at SC again for an update.

## **21.3.13 Highways Matters Update**

- Salt bins in Acton Burnell have been replaced.
- The potholes in Pitchford and Acton Burnell which were raised in the last Parish Council meeting have been reported to Shropshire Council and have been added to its programme of works.
- The Clerk has reported water on the road from Acton Burnell to Ruckley causing icy roads in cold conditions. SC has not responded to this report yet.
- Remedial action has been taken to clear the flood at the bottom of the hill in Frodesley near Luckington Stud. This is likely to require further action as it is still susceptible to flooding. The Clerk has reported the deterioration of the carriageway as a result of the flooding to SC.

## **21.3.14 Local Broadband (BT & Airband)**

After the publication of the Agenda, the PC received information from Connecting Shropshire explaining these works and the fact that BT do not need to apply for planning permission to undertake them. A representative from Airband, Ray Adams, will attend this Parish Council meeting to explain these works further and answer any questions Councillors may have.

## **21.3.18 Return to Face to Face Meetings and 21.3.19 Date of next meeting**

Currently the Government requires the Parish Council to return to face-to-face meetings from 7 May 2021. The Clerk has enquired as to the availability and likely opening status of Pitchford Village Hall for the next meeting scheduled for 11 May 2021. It is still hoped that the Government may legislate to extend virtual meetings into the autumn; however SALC advises the Parish Council to plan for a face to face meeting in May.

# Acton Burnell, Frodesley, Pitchford, Ruckley & Langley Parish Council

SALC has provided a list of risks that the Parish Council should consider regarding returning to face to face meetings and suggested actions to mitigate. See SALC Special News Bulletin 5 February 2021. The Parish Council should discuss these risks and take actions accordingly.

Should any Councillor not be able to return to face to face meetings, it may be necessary to hold an additional virtual meeting in April 2021 in order to allow that Councillor the maximum amount of time before disqualification by virtue of s.85 of the Local Government Act 1972 becomes an issue.

## **Extraordinary meeting June 2021**

The Clerk notes that an extraordinary meeting may need to be held in June 2021 in order to sign off the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) which will be due on 30 June 2021. Due to the appointment of a new Clerk and Internal Auditor, it may not be possible to complete these forms in time for approval at the scheduled May Parish Council meeting.

## **Clerk's hours**

The Clerk has undertaken several training sessions since starting in January and as a result is currently working additional hours to those contracted. The Clerk will assess whether these additional hours may be absorbed into contracted hours over the next two months. However, it may be necessary for the Clerk to request payment for some additional hours at the next meeting.

## **Insurance**

The Parish Council's insurance expires on 31 May 2021. The Clerk will obtain new insurance quotes in time for the next Parish Council meeting.

Anna Morris  
Clerk & RFO  
ABFPR&L Parish Council