



AUDLEY RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT FOR ACTIVITIES IN 2025/26

Audley Rural Parish Council Representation

Audley Rural Parish Council consists of fifteen Ward Councillors:

Audley Ward	Councillor	Mr Neil Ginnis (co-opted Dec 2025)
	Councillor	Mr Ian Rowley
	Councillor	Mr Stephen Johnson
	Councillor	Mr Philip Cole
Bignall End	Councillor	Mr Nick Hayes (Chair)
	Councillor	Mr Deane Jervis (Vice Chair)
	Councillor	Mr Andy Howell (co-opted June 2023)
	Councillor	Mr Tom Cork (co-opted Nov 2022)
	Councillor	Mr Ron Garlick
Halmer End	Councillor	Mrs Michelle Toft
	Councillor	Mr Chris Griffiths (co-opted Dec 2025)
	Councillor	Ms Sarah Williams (co-opted Dec 2025)
	Councillor	Mr Kelvin Chell (co-opted Nov 2022)
	Councillor	Mr Paul Maddock (co-opted Aug 2025)
	Councillor	Mr Chris Cooper

Very sadly on Sunday 14th September 2025, Parish Councillor Mr Brian Billings passed away after a short illness. Brian joined the Parish Council in July 2022 and enjoyed 3 years with great enthusiasm and commitment to our Parish at the meetings. Brian's loss is felt by many in our Parish, as he held many voluntary roles, in particular the Minnie Pit Commemoration Group and Audley Parish Angling Group at Bateswood. Brian has left a lasting legacy at the Minnie Pit memorial site for all to visit and remember those who lost their lives in the disaster in 1918, and he is very much missed.

The Parish Council AGM, (Annual General Meeting), takes place in May each year. In May 2025, Mr Nick Hayes was appointed as the Chairman and Mr Deane Jervis as the Vice Chairman. Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month at various locations around the Parish, there may also be additional meetings during the year to cater for any extra volume of business. There have been a number of changes to the Parish Council over the last year. In May 2025, Mr Duran O'Dwyer moved away from the Parish and Mr Paul Maddock was co-opted to the vacancy. In November 2025, Mr Mike Joynson and Rev John Taylor retired from the Parish Council. Our thanks go to Duran, Mike and John for their valued contributions to the Parish over the years. Mr Neil Ginnis, Ms Sarah Williams and Mr Chris Griffiths were co-opted to the casual vacancies in December 2025. The next all-out Parish and Borough Elections will be held in May 2026. This means (at the time of writing) that nominations will be invited from anyone qualified to stand as a Parish Councillor. The Parish Councillors are unpaid volunteers and give up their time to the Parish with the intention of making the area better. The Chair does receive an annual allowance due to the additional input required to hold this position.

Newcastle under Lyme Borough and Staffordshire County Representation

The Parish is represented at Newcastle Borough Council by Councillor Rebekah Lewis, Councillor Nick Crisp and Councillor Ian Wilkes, and at Staffordshire County Council by Councillor Rhys Machin. County and Borough Councillors are invited to attend the Parish Council meetings with a standing agenda item reserved for their updates.

Member of Parliament (MP) Representation

The Parish is represented by Mr Adam Jogee MP who has been our MP since 2024. The Parish Council will continue to work with our current MP to get action on matters of concern to the Parish.

Parish Council Notice Boards and Website

There are seven notice boards containing the latest Parish Council information across the Parish which are updated regularly. The website is also updated regularly and was accessed by 4,523 visitors (UK) during the year (April 2025 to March 2026). Information about the Parish Council is also published on the Parish Council's Facebook page and shared to various community group pages on social media. Articles are also included in the newly created Audley Parish Newsletter created by local residents.

Planning Matters

Throughout the year, the Parish Council receives planning applications for consultation. The Parish Council is committed to avoiding inappropriate planning developments and is asked by the Planning Authority to express its views on each application and also any comments passed to it by the residents. This they do in an advisory capacity only, as the final decision in each case rests with the relevant Planning Authority. Between the period of April 2025 and March 2026, the Parish Council has commented on 70 (40 last year) planning applications. Several planning applications were called in to the Borough Council's Planning Committee for full deliberation of the decision. This is where there are a large number of representations / objections and where it involves large developments in the Green Belt. This year has seen an increase in Permission in Principle (PIP) applications and also developments on the Green Belt which have been determined to be Grey Belt. The Parish Council has written a joint letter to Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council, along with other Parish Councils, expressing their concerns for these types of applications and requesting that all decisions are made by the Planning Committee rather than the officers when considering Grey Belt in Green Belt applications. The Parish Council has considered the major strategic development such as the warehouse scheme adjacent to Junction 16 of the M6 (Ref: 25/00346/OUT). Detailed representations have been made to object to the scheme. The outcome is awaited, but the Parish Council remains concerned about the loss of 80 hectares of Green Belt and the impact on traffic which may divert through our villages to avoid congestion on the A500. There is also an increased risk of accidents on the A500/Alsager Road slip road as a result of the development.

Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council's Local Plan Update

The Planning Inspector's report of the Local Plan is currently awaited prior to adoption. This is following the public hearing sessions in spring 2025 and main modifications consultation in December 2025. The modifications removed housing sites AB12 and AB33 but retained AB15 (33 homes north of Vernon Avenue) and the large strategic employment site AB2/AB2A. The Parish Council made detailed representations at the public hearing sessions to object to the inclusion of AB2/AB2A and subsequent loss of 80 hectares of Green Belt and prime agricultural farming land.

Audley Rural Parish Neighbourhood Plan Update

The referendum was held on 25th September 2025 and 1,228 people voted in favour of adopting the Audley Rural Neighbourhood Plan. There was a total of 1,445 total votes cast, which represented a 23% turnout. The plan was officially "made" (adopted) by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council on 1st October 2025. The Neighbourhood Plan differs from the Local Plan as it contains a set of planning policies which are bespoke to Audley Rural Parish, however the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for housing or employment, as this is done through the Borough Council's Local Plan (referred to above).

A500 Slip road/Alsager Road Junction accidents

This year has seen a large increase in accidents at the junction, with 3 occurring over an 8 day period in August. Following repeated requests from the Parish Council to National Highways, temporary signs were installed in October 2025 and a site visit held to look at the issues. Since the temporary signs have been in place, 4 serious accidents have occurred between November 2025 and March 2026 with many more near misses. The Parish Council continues to campaign to improve the safety of the A500/Alsager Road slip road, especially when there is congestion on the A500 and drivers seek to queue jump the traffic.

Grant Applications and donations to help the Community

Contributions towards the Newcastle Food bank have continued since the scheme first started in April 2020. To 31st March 2026, donations totalling 2439.17 kg, which is equivalent to 5,808 meals have been donated by Audley Parish through the local collection point in Tesco Express Audley, which the Parish Council transport to the warehouse.

The Parish Council has subsidised the 'Door 2 Door' community transport service to help vulnerable people access transport, not normally available to them. 'Door 2 Door' were awarded further funding of £500 to keep travel costs low for the service users. This year a total of 80 (110 last year) journeys have been completed for people, with most being for medical appointments.

During the year the following community groups received funding of £2819 (inc £350 c/fwd to 26/27) from the Parish Council's Grant Programme:

- Halmer End CIC – replacement boiler
- Audley Cricket Club – ladies cricket team kit
- Bignall End Cricket Club – ladies cricket team kit
- Audley OAP/Village Hall Association – kitchen refurb work and asbestos removal
- Audley OAP/Village Hall Association with Audley Churchyard group – Shed for tools
- Audley Allotment Association – replacement mower following theft
- Scot Hay Social Centre and Recreation – new bin for grounds
- Wood Lane Cricket Club – new defib for team and community use

Audley Millennium Green Trust

The Parish Council has also supported Audley Millennium Green Trust with £2000 towards the upkeep and maintenance of this important village greenspace plus also £5000 towards a tree survey and necessary tree work across the site. This year there has been welcomed help from additional volunteers but the Trust would still love to hear from anyone who can help with the maintenance to keep it open for all to use.

Parish Allotments

The Parish has allotment sites at Audley and Halmer End. The Audley Allotment Association successfully runs the Alsager Road site which has 58 plots let and a waiting list of 17. The Parish Council manage the Halmer End Harrison Close site, with all 21 plots let and a waiting list of 12. The Parish Council has provided skips at both sites, to help clear up the plots, along with access way improvements at Audley.

Village Car Parks and Problem Parking

On 22nd January 2026, the Parish Council was pleased to finally sign the lease with Audley Methodist Church to take on this important village car park for 99 years at Church Street. Following initial survey work, a planning application was submitted in March 2026 in order to improve the car park. Tenders will be invited from a contractor to deliver the improvement work as soon as possible. The Parish Council is also responsible for the car park adjacent to the Butchers Arms (Church Street), High Street (Halmer End), Miles Green Play area (Station Road) and Alsager Road Play area. A maintenance programme is in place to keep these sites tidy and in good order.

To address the problem parking in Church Street, the Parish Council is continuing to work with Staffordshire Police to target illegal parking on the zig-zags and zebra crossing in Church Street, Audley. A large number of fines (up to £100 and 3 penalty points) have been issued and a number of warning signs put up to deter against parking on the zebra crossing and adjacent white zig-zags. Issues regarding enforcement on the double yellow lines have been raised with County Councillor Machin, who has requested increased civil enforcement visits. Highways issues are regularly raised with County Councillor Machin, to whom we are grateful for continued input to resolve county matters which impact our Parish.

Children's Play areas and Wildlife Areas

The Parish Council provides and maintains 9 play areas situated at Alsager Road Audley, Albert Street and Bignall End Road in Bignall End, Miles Green, Halmer End, Alsagers Bank, Rileys Field, Scot Hay and Queen Street. Play areas are subject to monthly inspections and subsequent reports are considered at the Parish Council meetings. Ongoing painting and maintenance of all the equipment is carried out as required during the year. Due to wear and tear, a new safety surface has been installed at a piece of equipment at Halmer End. As with all play equipment it is costly to replace and upkeep. Dog fouling on the playing fields continues to be a problem. If you see a dog owner failing to pick up, please do report it to the dog warden at: www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/all-services/environment/dog-wardens thereby enabling fines to be imposed. There are Dog Control Orders in place at all play areas, with dogs on leads or in some cases dogs excluded from fenced areas. You can also report these issues to the NBC dog warden.

Annual Maintenance Programme

The Annual Maintenance programme of the Parish assets continues, and the contract has been awarded to local contractors to provide an annual maintenance contract until March 2026, when it will be reviewed. A new contractor has taken on the grass cutting of the Parish Play areas. The Parish Council welcomes quotes from local competent and insured contractors, if you are interested in quoting for small maintenance jobs around the parish, please email the Parish Clerk at clerk@audleyparishcouncil.gov.uk

Public Seats, Bus Shelters, Grit Bins

The ongoing maintenance programme for the 70 seats located around the Parish is in place to keep the seats in good order and useable. A painting programme is now underway and so far 32 have been repaired and painted. If you see a seat in a poor state of repair, please contact the Parish Clerk and we will look to repair it. There are 6 Parish-owned bus shelters in the Parish. We are continuing to work with Sir Thomas Boughey High School to provide artwork at the bus shelter on the High Street, Halmer End (next to the car park). A new bus shelter has been installed along Ravens Lane following damage caused.

There are 22 grit bins installed around the Parish, which are topped up when needed with grit to help keep the Parish moving in bad weather. With the bouts of icy weather during the winter period, the grit bins were well used with 6 additional bins installed at various places.

Leddys Field

We are very grateful to have the ongoing input from the Leddys Field Supporters Group, which consists of several resident volunteers who give up their weekends to maintain the site for everyone's enjoyment and to help the wildlife flourish on the site. Recent work includes pond repairs which have successfully supported the return of Great Crested Newts. Wildlife observed on the site includes siskins, tree creepers, linnets, and tawny owls, and frog spawn has been noted in the stream, indicating a healthy ecosystem. The group has also been fundraising for improvements and to keep the grass cut on the site. The Parish Council has continued with the current tree management programme and a large number of trees infected with Ash Dieback were removed in the autumn of 2025. Funding has also been applied for through the Rural Payments Agency to create a further 10-year Woodland Management Plan.

Bluebell Wood, Alsagers Bank

Bluebell Wood provides a lovely walk down into Apedale and is well worth a visit when the bluebells are in full bloom during spring. Both sites are inspected regularly.

Margaret's Garden, Church Street

Ongoing maintenance of the pocket park in the middle of the village continues. The pocket park provides a little wildlife haven in Church Street with somewhere pleasant to sit. A flagpole was also installed to provide a focal point for civic pride and community events.

Annual Parish Awards

The Parish Council annually awards three trophies, for 2026 they will be awarded at the Annual Parish meeting to be held in April 2026 and will be included in next year's Annual report for 2026/27. Last year (in May 2025) they were awarded as follows:

- **R.W. Edwards Community Award:** Mrs Vanda McCall ("The Cake Lady"), for her dedicated service and the continued success of the Audley Artisan Market.
- **Elsie Kelsall Young Persons Award:** Master E. Eardley, commended for his articulate communication skills and enthusiasm during a site visit with the MP to look at issues within the Parish.
- **Capewell Naylor Trophy for Services to the Environment:** Mr Tony Adair, for his meticulous assistance with the maintenance and accessibility of the parish footpath network. *(The Parish Council were saddened to learn that Tony passed away suddenly in October 2025. Tony was an important member of the community who worked tirelessly for the area completing many footpath repairs and clearing them to keep them accessible to all. The Parish Council is working closely with Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way to continue this good work).*

CCTV

The 9 CCTV cameras are invaluable in assisting the Police with their investigations, especially illegal parking. Approximately £1815 was spent as a result of ASB/criminal damage to Parish owned assets (£740 last year). CCTV footage requests from the Police have increased this year to 18 (16 last year). Police resources are allocated based on the numbers of crimes reported. Please report all non-urgent incidents to 101 or online to Staffordshire Police at www.staffordshire.police.uk

Vehicle Activated Signs and Speed Indicator Devices

The Parish Council continue to monitor the speed within the parish with the 9 speed indicator devices at key areas across the Parish. These help to slow the traffic and gather vehicle quantity & speed statistics. These work well with the Police using the data to review the hotspots and schedule the Speed Camera Vans accordingly.

Parish Council projects:

Below is an update of some of the projects over the last year:

Church Street Audley Methodist Car park (Budget £85k) – Following the signing of the lease in January 2026, the project is now progressing through the planning phase. Technical progress includes drainage tests and trial pits. Planning permission has now been sought to improve the car park.

Bignall End Road play area car park (Budget £50k) – Negotiations are still ongoing to take on a lease from the Newcastle Borough Council in order to create formal parking for residents of the terraced properties plus also visitors to the play area.

Bus Subsidy (£32k) - The Parish Council subsidises the D&G 1/1A (Monday–Friday evening bus) 1/1A (Saturdays) and 1 (Sundays & Bank Holidays) service to protect vital routes and ensure services continue through Audley rather than stopping short in places like Chesterton, Silverdale or Newcastle Town Centre. Between April 2025 and March 2026, a total of 18,295 passengers used the service.

Car park (adj) Butchers Arms: Ongoing maintenance work was completed, including new line markings and measures to protect the boundary fencing and around the lamp post column following damage.

Marion Platts Way (former mineral line) – Since 2012, the Parish Council has been asking Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council (NBC) to improve our important walkway in the Parish. Some work has been undertaken, but the problems of poor drainage and floods in bad weather still exist elsewhere. In March, a joint letter written with Sir Thomas Boughy High School was sent to the Chief Executive of NBC setting out the ongoing issues with photos, asking for further investment.

CCTV upgrade – Funding of £500 was received from the Newcastle Partnership towards an upgraded CCTV camera in Church Street to allow ANPR capabilities. The CCTV units are costly to maintain and then replace when they have reached the end of their life.

Christmas Lights (£8.7k) – Every year in July planning starts for the installation of Christmas lights. This year the tree lights were removed at Audley St James church trees and replaced with colourful uplighting which also included lighting up the Church tower. This is in addition to the displays in Church Street Audley, Bignall End and Halmer End. A decorated tree was also displayed at the biennial Christmas Tree Festival at Audley St James.

Parish Finances for 2025/26

Income:

A total income of £245,861 was received. This consisted of the Precept £227,067. The rest of the income (£18,794) is from other sources such as bank interest, donations, grants, VAT reclaim etc. This was the first year that there was no grant received from Newcastle Borough Council (last year £4,397) for the reduced Council Tax Base Support.

Expenditure:

A total amount of £226,601* was spent during the year 2025/26 as follows (*note these are actual figures, whereas the accounting statements are based on income and expenditure so include adjustments made*):

Budget Heading	Amount	%
Staffing costs (all related costs inc. employer on costs, pension and HMRC)	£47,445	21%
Bus subsidy	£32,122	14%
Play areas x 9 (maintenance)	£33,526	15%
Neighbourhood Plan / Local Plan and Planning matters	£22,331	10%
Special projects (inc. Xmas lights, CCTV, Community Transport)	£18,258	8%
Car parks - creation, maintenance and fees	£16,089	7%
Donations to community groups and other S137 activities e.g. Remembrance day parade	£12,691	6%
Office administration costs	£11,002	5%
Seats, bus shelters, notice boards and grit bins (Parish)	£8,977	4%
Wildlife areas (maintenance)	£12,310	5%
Highways speed devices and projects	£1,841	1%
Misc. spend – unadopted land and other Parish assets e.g. Grit bins	£3,161	1%
Parish grants programme	£2,469	1%
Parish bowling green (Audley)	£1,320	1%
Chair's allowance	£1,360	1%
Parish allotments	£1,099	0.5%
Footpaths	£600	0.3%

There is £162,962 in the bank as at the end of the financial year, which includes earmarked reserves of £88,561 for projects including a new car park at Church Street (by Tesco/Heron Foods) and Bignall End Road plus other ringfenced reserves which are carried forward to next year.

The coming year (2026/27) will see the Precept kept the same with no increase at £86.70 per year for Band D Council Tax to provide a precept of £227,067. A budget meeting was held in November 2025 to give parishioners the opportunity to input into the budgeting process for 2026/27.

Additional information can be found on the Parish Council website – www.audleyparishcouncil.gov.uk
Audley Rural Parish Council - April 2026