

Comberbach Annual Parish Meeting

Comberbach Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2020 - 2021

4th May 2021

This annual report is my 4th as Chairman following last year's Parish Council AGM, and the agreement that because of Covid restrictions the Chair should be carried on in the year 2020/21. The Vice Chairman has indicated that he would prefer not to take over the Chairmanship this year so at the Parish Council meeting I will be willing to accept another year subject to your endorsement later.

Comberbach Community

We have seen a tremendous initiative from residents to help others in the village and there are too many to mention individually. However, we must not forget the role the Methodist Church plays as well as the Fete Committee organising such wonderful events as the Halloween extravaganza and the Christmas light displays and individual's during Covid to rally round and provide assistance where needed. I have also enjoyed reading the anthology "Lockdowns & Light-ups" organised by Nicola Ashbrook of what Covid 19 has meant to their lives in 2020.

Comment also needs to be made on the news that Steve Howard is standing down as Chairman of the FETE Committee and that he will be retiring from running the Post Office in late 2022. His enthusiasm, drive, and commitment to the village over the years has been fantastic.

I have received comments from new villagers on the wonderful community spirit in the village and as a consequence when houses are put up for sale they are quickly sold as families want to move in.

Administration and Parish Councillors

The continuing support of all my fellow councillors cannot go unnoticed and they all contribute positively to the management of any issues arising in the parish, and as Chairman I recognise and thank them for that. I also welcome our new co-opted Councillors Val McDermott and Richard Chandler. I would also like to thank our 3 Ward Councillors Lynn Gibbon, Norman Wright and Phil Marshall for their continued support.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of both Denise French and Stephen Penwill as Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer respectively who continue to support the Council, developing strong links with our unitary council and the network of Cheshire clerks, and in developing regulatory requirements, and improvements to our financial systems and controls, and ensuring we are complying with the latest standing orders.

2020 has brought changes to both working practices and the necessity to create our new Parish Council website www.comberbach-pc.gov.uk. Special thanks to Denise and Steve for their efforts in creating this new dynamic website.

The Precept

The Council approved the draft budget for 2021-22 at the meeting on 19th January 2021. the Council maintains the same Band D charge as 2020/21 and requested a Precept of £22,655.

Reserves

The Council is required to maintain adequate financial reserves to meet the needs of the organisation, and to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget.

Changes have been made to the back-office process on how we manage the budget and reserves through an external software package, which is a much simpler task to review. We hold a quarterly Finance Committee meeting to review expenditure, agree budgets and future projects.

Our plan is to continue to maintain healthy reserves for future projects which will require funding over the next few years and which may exceed the cost affordable from a single year's precept.

Examples of expenditure allocated and spent in 2020/21

- Replacement of part footpath around the recreation area Scheduled May
- Replacement picnic tables and some benches at the recreation area
- Replacement Community Notice Board at the Rec Area
- Additional table top games picnic tables
- New village signage
- Provision of a Pump Track for use by children of all ages Scheduled May

Examples of expenditure to be spent in future years

- Replacement of Defibrillators following end of life
- New Community notice board for The Avenue
- Additional equipment at Rec Area example Table Tennis table
- Speed Indicator Device for sharing with Anderton & Marbury PC

Comberbach Village News

The Council made a decision to withhold invoices to advertisers in view of lockdown with many of the advertisers being unable to accept work projects. Also special thanks to the team for the April covid update.

Many thanks to Ron Stephens, Kath Wharfe and her newsletter team for the excellent work they do, in completing the newsletter and distribution to all residents. A big thank you to all the contributors who provide valuable information on activities in the village.

Highways

August saw the new Village Gateway signs being erected in place of the old signs and many have commented on their design. Not a day goes past that we do not see a press comment about the state of the roads across the County and Country in general. What is of grave concern is the workmanship and standard of the repair. We will continue to monitor our roads.

Planning

Over the past 12 months we have seen an increase in the number of planning applications received with some applications appearing to be outside of the planning regulations but are still endorsed for approval by the planning officer.

Village Speed initiative

We continue to note cars exceeding the speed limit and we managed to book the Speed Indicator Device but due to lockdown we had to curtail its use. However, during the period, we had the device there was a noticeable reduction in speed from just displaying the device around certain specified points in the village. The plan is that in conjunction with Anderton & Marbury Parish Council we will purchase our own SID for use.

Recreation Area

During the lockdown the picnic tables were replaced as well as the repainting of the benches and a thorough clean of the MUGA area and jet spraying of the basketball backboards. Additional work was undertaken to strengthen the fence surround the soft play area. Northwich Town Council continue to provide a quarterly report as well as the monthly report completed by Councillors and volunteers, together with an annual ROSPA report which identified no major issues.

A number of young residents came up with the suggestion to install a skatepark behind the village storage unit where the old memorial hall was sited. Following an analysis and comments from residents it was suggested that a pump track would best fit both the area and ability for children of all ages to use the facility.

The Council approved a budget in January and went to 5 suppliers of pump tracks for prices and completion of the work. A supplier was agreed Clark&Kent and it's envisaged that the track will be completed in May this year. There was no need for planning permission and the local PCSO approved the concept.

The recent ROSPA inspection highlighted no major issues with the comment that the equipment is in excellent condition based on the fact that its 20 years old. The inspector

commented that by doing regular maintenance as well as refitting the flooring to the tower with additional buffalo boards has strengthened the unit.

Your Council

At the December zoom meeting it was pleasing to accept the nomination of Val McDermott as an unelected casual vacancy, and in March the nomination and acceptance of Richard Chandler. This brings the Council to its full complement of Councillors till 2023 elections.

I thank all Councillors for their help over the past financial year and voluntary service to the community. The Lockdowns over the last 12 months together with the Anthology have highlighted the tremendous community spirit we have in the village. Residents who have moved into the village in the last couple of years have commented most positively of the welcome they have received. It's also noticeable that house sales signs are erected within weeks of the original sale sign. A great example of people wanting to move into the village.

Finally, a big thank you to all of the volunteers that assist with the various organisations and societies that complement the village life. Hopefully 2021 June onwards will see us getting back to some normality.

Thank You

John Ryder