

Minutes of the Comberbach Annual Parish Meeting
held on Tuesday 10 May 2022 at 6.30 pm at Comberbach Memorial Hall

Present

Councillor J Ryder (Chairman)

Councillors:

R Chandler

J Johnston

V McDermott

D French (Clerk)

S Penwill (RFO)

There were no members of the public present.

1. Apologies – Councillors Bradley, Darwin and Holt.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 4 May 2021

The minutes were accepted as a correct record of the meeting.

3. Chairman's Report

Councillor John Ryder presented a report on the activities over the past year – attached at appendix 1.

4. Parish Council Accounts

The RFO updated on the financial situation of the Parish Council including:

- Advertising charges for the newsletter brought in £150 compared to £90 the previous year, both years being affected by the Council decision not to charge advertisers, to support their businesses, as the pandemic hit in 2020.
- Costs Staff costs were £750 less than the previous year at £5,100, mainly due to differences in timing of PAYE payments to HMRC. Administration costs were also reduced, mainly as the previous year saw the costs of setting up the website and the purchase of a new laptop for the RFO. Maintenance costs reduced from £4,200 to £2,500 with reduced work due to the pandemic, the decision to replace rather than repair the swings, and no defibrillator costs this year.
- Projects and Reserves - The projects this year were the Pump Track which was fully funded by the parish council and the Speed Indicator Device, mostly funded by a grant which had been applied for by both this parish council and Anderton with Marbury Parish Council. Reserves stand at £21,000 excluding the cost of the swings and are sufficient to cover the cost of statutory reserves and other projects being considered by the Council. It should be noted that several structures in the recreation area are nearing end of life and will require significant expenditure in the not-too-distant future, with the support of grant funding.
- Bank Balances Opening bank balances of over £50,000 included funds to pay for the Pump Track at £19,000 plus VAT, which was paid in June 2021. However, costs during the year were lower than usual due to the pandemic, cost efficiencies and timing issue of some payments, with the closing balance

of over £42,500 being sufficient to provide for the replacement swing set (due to be installed this month at a cost of £7,000 plus VAT) and as a base for future expenditure requirements.

The Meeting ended at 6.30 pm

Appendix 1 Chairman's 2021 - 2022

10th May 2022

This annual report is my 5th as Chairman following last year's Parish Council AGM, and the agreement that because of Covid restrictions continuing I would be willing to extend my time in the Chair, and the Vice Chairman had indicated he would prefer not to take over the Chairmanship.

I will be willing to accept a final year as Chairman subject to your endorsement later. However, I must stress that after 6 years in the Chair there will be a necessity for a new Councillor to be appointed as Chairman together with a Vice Chairman to be appointed for this coming year.

It was sad to report the death of Rena Bradley on 2nd July 2021 who had been a stalwart in the organisation, set up and running of the Memorial Hall together with her role as Councillor for the last few years.

I was also to receive the resignation of Steven Hornby due to new work commitments; I thank Steve for his support particularly as Chairman of Finance Committee

Comberbach Community

We continue to see a wonderful Community Spirit around the village and the Community Facebook pages bear testament to this. With Covid restrictions now lifted we see more children and residents using the play area facilities. The plans for the Platinum Jubilee are well under way and all residents have received a flyer in the last few days of events scheduled.

I continue to receive positive 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 Councillor John Darwin 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.

The Precept

The Council approved the draft budget for 2022-23 at the meeting on 18th January 2021. the Council recommended an increase of 4%.

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.

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 2021/22

- Replacement and repair of part footpath around the recreation area
- Provision of a Pump Track for use by children of all ages
- Provision of a Speed Indicator Device in co sharing with Anderton with Marbury PC
- Replacement of swings with additional seats scheduled for 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
- Replacement of recreation area equipment

Comberbach Village News

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.

CW&C

The regular updates received from our Ward Councillors at meetings, would suggest that in certain area, e.g., highways (roads and gulley's) and planning (response timescales) they will be able to address these problems to improve the service in the near future

Village Speed initiative

The Speed Indicator Device is shared on a monthly rotation with Anderton with Marbury.

The device has been used since September last year and we have noted that the average speed depending on location is approx. 32mph.

The use of the device suggests that Drivers once they see their speed "flash up" tend to slow down, and therefore its use is having an effect on managing speeding drivers.

Opportunities still exist for a Community Speedwatch Group to be formed which would be supported by the Parish Council.

Recreation Area & Pump Track

Following the suggestion from 4 teenagers that we should install a skate board park on the strip of land where the old memorial stood, it is very pleasing that a suggestion was made by a resident that the Parish Council should consider the installation of a pump track.

This facility could be used by all ages. After approval by the Parish Council funds were allocated to build a pump track. The end of May/early June saw the construction of the pump track at a cost of £19,750 plus vat which was funded wholly by Parish Council reserves.

Since opening, the facility is used by all ages to enjoy using a balance bike, skateboard, scooter or indeed just running around the track.

In June we noted damage to one of the swing legs on the structure. It was agreed that we would repair ourselves but following receipt of replacement legs they were found not to be compatible with the existing legs.

Therefore, the Parish Council and after consultation with a potential supplier have approved a budget to replace the existing one bay swing with a new 3 bay swing structure to include flat seats a basket/cradle and an accessible boat seat to allow more than one person to use at the same time.

Again, it should be noted that funds for this have again come out of reserves where funds have been allocated for new and replacement equipment.

Your Council

At the October meeting it was pleasing to accept the nomination of John Darwin as an unelected casual vacancy This brought the Council to its full complement of Councillors until Steven Hornby's resignation.

I thank all Councillors for their help over the past financial year and voluntary service to the community.

Finally, a big thank you to all of the volunteers that assist with the various organisations and societies that complement the village life. Hopefully 2022 onwards will see us getting back to some normality.

Thank You

John Ryder