

Minutes of the Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council held on Tuesday 5 December 2023

Present

Councillors:

John Ryder (Chairman in the Chair)

Bill Briggs

Sandy Cameron

Richard Chandler

John Darwin

Bob Holt

Jill Johnston

Val McDermott

Denise French (Clerk)

Stephen Penwill (RFO)

CWAC Cllr Lynn Gibbon

The Meeting started at 6.45pm.

Public Open Forum

There were no members of the public present.

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from CWAC Councillor Marshall.

2. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 24 October 2023

(23/70) RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 24 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4. Police Update

PCSO Di Wiggins attended the meeting. There had been some issues in the Marbury Ward with hawking; updates had been made on social media. Any concerns could be raised via 101.

Councillor Cameron raised an issue at the Primary School around access for the coach on swimming trips and whether cones could be placed on the road. PCSO Wiggins said she felt a banner requesting considerate parking would be more effective along with action from the school in talking to parents who have parked in the way of the coach. The line markings could also be repainted. She agreed to raise these points with the school at a visit the following day.

5. John Heselwood, Cheshire Community Action

John Heselwood from Cheshire Community Action was welcomed to the meeting. He confirmed that the Parish Council had previously registered the parish boundary as a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) area and this registration remained valid.

John had shared a presentation that showed the statutory role given to NPs and that they must focus on land use and development policies. A NP for Comberbach would need to comply with the Cheshire West and Chester adopted Local Plan. A NP would comprise any number of policies that could focus on design, housing, biodiversity, green space etc. A NP would not address issues such as highways, events, speeding. All policies must be realistic and deliverable.

John outlined the process for producing a NP and current grant funding available which would cover the total cost of producing a NP with additional technical support packages available for specific areas such as design codes or environmental impact assessments. CCA no longer had in-house expertise but had access to a consultant who could assist with a NP. There would be an important role for volunteers to support the process. Data from 2018 suggested the average number of volunteers involved in supporting the process for a NP was 15 and the average timescale was over 3 years. John outlined the process for producing a NP which would culminate in a referendum. The referendum was resourced and paid for by CWAC. A simple majority was sufficient to approve the NP which would then be 'made'.

John also referred to the recent Levelling Up Act which had introduced a Neighbourhood Priority Statement which was a lighter touch process; legislation was awaited.

Members raised that Comberbach was 'washed over' by Green Belt and what did this mean in planning terms? John replied that it meant residential development would only occur if there was a proven need. John suggested if considering a NP for Comberbach a review of the CWAC Local Plan should be undertaken to establish which policies were relevant to the village and then identify any gaps which a NP could be used to address. These areas would form policies for which evidence would be needed and a consultant would help with this.

John explained that an area could not be allocated as public open space without the agreement of the landowner but a policy relating to protection of views and vistas could be helpful. Members felt this contradicted the opinion given at an online meeting with CWAC Planning that suggested protection of a view was not possible. John said there were examples in 'made' NPs where protection of a view had held weight.

John concluded by advising that the CWAC Local Plan was under review. It was also noted that a new Policy Framework was due in April and the Parish Council was recommended to engage in this process.

John was thanked for his attendance and helpful input.

6. Progress Reports and Updates

6.1 Resilience Plan – CWAC Councillor Gibbon said areas were encouraged to have a Resilience Plan. The Chairman had populated the current version and Members had received a copy to add in any outstanding items. Members agreed to send updates to the Clerk who would collate a final version for consideration at the next meeting.

6.2 Unknown Woman in War statue – the statue had been installed in time for Remembrance and positive feedback had been received.

(23/71) RESOLVED: that the updates be noted and the Resilience Plan be considered further at the next meeting.

7. Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) Councillors' reports

CWAC Councillor Gibbon updated on various items:

- The 3 x CWAC Councillors had approved the Parish Council application for £1000 towards the swing set.
- There were now 3 Public Rights of Way Officers in post and she would share details with the Clerk to circulate to all Members.
- The CWAC Chief Executive had agreed to attend a meeting for all the Marbury Ward Parish Councils on a Thursday evening in January or February, the date would be confirmed as soon as possible. Advance notice of topics would be requested.
- There were various consultations underway including the CWAC Budget 2024-25; Heritage Strategy and Transport Strategy.
- Planning backlog – the current backlog across Marbury Ward was 52 applications with 18 awaiting allocation to a case officer.
- Highways – the standard of repair was much better quality following the new contract that had commenced in April.
- Space Hive – the latest round of funding had been allocated but there had been no applications from the Marbury Ward. Members had previously discussed this option and explained it was intended to consider a bid to a future fund for a larger project at the Recreation Area.
- Soot Hill was now open and the cost of the restoration works had been £3m which meant an underspend of £500k. Councillor Gibbon had requested some of the underspend be allocated to initiatives in the Marbury Ward in view of the impact on the Ward during the works with traffic diverted onto local roads. Councillor Gibbon agreed to ask about the warranty for the works.
- Winnington Bridge – this project had not been allocated funding in the last round of Levelling Up bids and feedback had included reference to land ownership issues and cycling and walking routes. Councillor Gibbon was attending a meeting on 13 December regarding any future bids.

Councillor Gibbon was thanked for her attendance and updates.

8. Neighbourhood Plan

Following the presentation by John Heselwood, Members discussed whether to progress the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Comberbach. Members felt the important issue was to understand whether the CWAC Local Plan gave sufficient protection to the overall character of the village. CWAC Councillor Gibbon explained that CWAC provided a Neighbourhood Plan toolkit on the website.

(23/72) RESOLVED: That the Groves consultancy be approached regarding the cost of an initial meeting to advise on key points that would be relevant for a Neighbourhood Plan for Comberbach.

9. Recreation Area and Pump Track

9.1 The Chairman updated: There was moss on the Wet Pour which would be treated with a jet wash once the weather was suitable.

9.2 The Inspection Reports for October and November were considered; there were no issues that needed addressing.

9.3 The new swing set had been ordered and was due for installation prior to Christmas.

9.4 Following installation of the new swing set there would be a need to repair the wet pour. The original supplier had been approached about purchasing new granules which could be supplied at a cost of £320 and the supplier had agreed to restore the surface without charge for their labour costs.

9.5 The Council had agreed to purchase new legs for the zip wire which would be collected from Hull. Councillor Chandler agreed to investigate collection of the legs.

(23/73) RESOLVED: that

- (a) The update on the Recreation Area be noted.
- (b) The purchase of wet pour granules be approved at a cost of £320.
- (c) The sum of £200 be agreed towards the cost of collecting the zip line legs.

10. Highways and Streetscene

10.1 There was no data from the Speed Indicator Device this month. It was currently located on The Avenue. Members had previously discussed locating the SID on Budworth Lane in Great Budworth parish but it was agreed to continue locating it in Comberbach for the time being.

Councillor Chandler had attended the meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner where an issue had been raised around lack of enforcement of speed

limits. The Police had a van that was used for speed enforcement but this was reserved for known hotspots.

10.2 The Council discussed issues with road surfaces in the village. Members noted that Cogshall Lane and Gibb Hill were both subject to temporary road closures the following week to enable resurfacing works to take place. A resident had raised concern about the surface of Warrington Road and Marbury Road. It was noted that an annual independent survey took place in January to review the condition of roads across Cheshire; the information from the survey was used to prioritise resurfacing works. Members suggested raising the issue of road surfaces at the meeting with the CWAC Chief Executive early in 2024.

10.3 Members discussed parking issues around the vicinity of Comberbach Primary School and a particular issue raised with access for the coach that took pupils to swimming lessons. Members felt there was a role for the school to monitor and manage the parking issues and that a banner encouraging considerate parking would be helpful.

10.4 The Council discussed issues caused by overhanging hedges etc that blocked footpaths to the detriment of pedestrians. A standard letter had been shared with CWAC Highways and this could be used where issues were identified as well as raising in the next Comberbach Village News.

10.5 The Council noted that issues had been caused at The Brook which had been blocked during recent storms by branches and household debris. This could also be raised in the Village News and directly.

(23/74) RESOLVED: that

(a) The issues around road surfacing will be raised with the CWAC Chief Executive at the Marbury Ward meeting in the new year.

(b) The Clerk will write to Comberbach Primary School advising that the Council will fund a banner requesting considerate parking subject to assurance that the School will also work to manage the parking situation around the vicinity.

(c) The issues of footpaths being blocked by overhanging branches be raised in the next Comberbach Village News and Councillors will undertake site visits of their road allocations to address specific issues via a standard letter.

(d) The issues with blocking the Brook be raised in the Comberbach Village News and directly with relevant residents.

11. Accounts and financial matters

11.1 The accounts for 30 October 2023 were listed in Appendix 1

11.2 The list of payments was in Appendix 2.

11.3 The Council considered a replacement laptop for the Clerk. The current laptop was 4 years old and was not working effectively. A sum had been included in the budget.

11.4 The Council approved the cost of the village Christmas tree.

11.5 The Council noted that the 2023/24 pay award had been finalised and new salary scales had been issued with effect from 1 April 2023.

(23/75) RESOLVED: that:

(a) The accounts in Appendix 1 with a balance of £14,518.00 and £28,397.09 in reserves be noted.

(b) The list of payments in Appendix 2 be approved.

(c) A new laptop be approved for the Parish Clerk at a maximum cost of £800 plus a separate keyboard.

(d) The sum of £180 for the village Christmas Tree be approved.

(e) The annual salary award with effect from 1 April 2023 for the Clerk and RFO be noted.

12. Projects

12.1 Freedom Fibre (FF) – Members noted that Freedom Fibre had arranged a drop in meeting for all residents on 28 November. It was disappointing that there had been no representation from Talk Talk but Factco had been very helpful. A map had been on display that showed the status of properties in terms of connection, with the majority of properties ready to connect.

12.2 D Day 80th Anniversary - the Clerk had contacted representatives of the Memorial Hall and Methodist Church to ascertain any plans for the commemoration, but both had confirmed they had no current plans. It was agreed to consider this further at the next meeting.

(23/76) RESOLVED: that:

(a) The update be received and noted.

(b) The Clerk will write to Freedom Fibre to thank them for their work with the Parish Council and their cooperative and pleasant approach to the project and to support the comments in the letter written by CW&C which endorses their work and approach.

(c) The 80th Anniversary commemoration for D Day be considered further at the next meeting.

13. Planning

13.1 Planning decisions were listed in Appendix 3

13.2 There were no enforcement matters.

(23/77) RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

14. Correspondence

The list of correspondence had been circulated.

(23/78) RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.

15. Representative Reports

- Comberbach Memorial Hall Management Committee – nothing to update.
- Police Liaison – this had been covered earlier in the meeting.
- School Liaison – covered earlier in the meeting.
- Litterpick – nothing to update.

16. Exclusion of Public and Press – Part 2

(23/79) RESOLVED: That in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business due to the confidential nature of the matters to be discussed.

17. Additional land for a sports field

There had been no response to a letter sent on behalf of the Parish Council.

(23/79) RESOLVED: that the Clerk will send a further letter offering an informal discussion with representatives of the Parish Council at a convenient date.

The Meeting closed at 9.45pm.

The next meeting of Comberbach Parish Council will be on Tuesday 16 January 2024 at 6.45pm.

Signed
Chairman

Appendix 1 Accounts for 30 October 2023 were approved:

Current account	£14,518.00	Reserve	£28,397.09
Cash book	£42,915.09	Reconciliation:	0

Appendix 2 Payments

Item	Amount	Power
Synchroprint – CVN, Nov 23 invoice 5861	£327.60	LGA 1972 s 111

Pre-Authorised Payments

Item	Amount	Power
DD – Tesco Mobile, Sep 23	£7.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Oct 23	£7.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MSOffice license Oct 23	£21.43	LGA 1972 s 111

Appendix 3 Recent planning decisions by CW&C

APPLICATION DETAILS	DATE OF VALIDATION	CURRENT POSITION
21/05070/OUT - Outline planning permission for a mixed use development of up to 1,550 units of residential dwellings including affordable housing (subject to viability); specialist accommodation for older people including residential care home; local centre and active ground floor uses comprising up to 600 sqm of flexible floorspace for retail (including small convenience food store); up to 275 sqm of health, nursery and community; up to 7,700 sqm of employment space; up to 950 sqm of cafe, restaurant, takeaway and public house floorspace; up to a 2,250sqm (up to 2FE) primary school with associated playing fields (Use Class F1(a)); and associated road infrastructure, landscaping (including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems), public realm and amenity space (all matters reserved except for vehicular access), land at Winnington Works	Wed 22 Dec 2021	Awaiting decision
21/01937/S73, Single storey side and rear extension and creation of first floor (Variation of conditions 2 (approved plans) and 3 (materials) of planning permission 19/01832/FUL), 31 Senna Lane	Fri 30 Apr 2021	Awaiting decision

23/00251/FUL <u>Drop the kerb to the side of property on Freshfields to allow access to create a new driveway and raise the kerb at the rear of the property removing the current drive way</u> 22 Cogshall Lane	6 March 2023	Awaiting decision
23/00734/FUL <u>Two storey rear extension and first floor side extension, with storm porch to front and roof alterations</u> 27 Senna Lane – AMENDED PLANS	7 March 2023	Approved
23/02712/TPO – 1 x small Robinia, request to fell to ground level due to root plate movement, Three Oaks, Marbury Road	29 August 2023	Approved
23/02653/FUL - modification of previous approved application (14/03115/FUL) by reducing the scale of the first floor front extension 11 Brookfield Road	1 September 2023	Approved
23/03026/FUL - Conversion of an existing stable block into guest accommodation, a domestic study and a security office. Conversion of an existing manage into an all weather sports pitch. Relocation of an existing garden maintenance shed. Construction of a new gym. Construction of a garage. Associated external works., Cogshall Hall, Senna Lane Also an application for Listed building consent	26 September 2023	Awaiting decision