

Minutes of the Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council held on Tuesday 14 January 2025

Present

Councillors:

John Ryder (Chairman in the Chair)

Bill Briggs

Sandy Cameron

John Darwin

Jill Johnston

Val McDermott

Denise French (Clerk)

Stephen Penwill (RFO)

Also present:

CWAC Councillor Phil Marshall

The Meeting started at 6.45pm.

Public Open Forum

There were no members of the public present.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Councillor Richard Chandler due to family reasons and Councillor Bob Holt due to illness.

2. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

Councillor Darwin declared a personal interest in Item 8, flooding on Cogshall Lane.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 26 November 2024

(25/01) RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 26 November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

4. Progress Reports and Updates

4.1 Resilience Plan – the latest version of the Resilience Plan was circulated. Members agreed to send any updates to the Clerk and to include an item in the newsletter seeking information from residents who may be able to provide any services to the village in the event of an emergency such as four wheel drive owners or tree surgeons etc. The Plan would then be considered at the next meeting.

4.2 Issues raised with CWAC – the Clerk had raised a number of issues with CWAC via the Ward Councillors. A response had been received from Planning with an explanation of the delay in dealing with enforcement matters and offering to attend a meeting.

(25/02) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The Resilience Plan be considered at the next meeting.
- (b) The issues raised with CWAC be noted and discussed with the Ward Councillor Phil Marshall at the meeting.

5. Parish Council budget and precept

The Council considered:

- (a) draft minutes of Finance Committee held on 7 January
- (b) virement of 2024/25 budgets to recognise actual costs incurred
- (c) the Quarter 3 budget report
- (d) the Parish Council Combined Forecast 24/25 and Budget 25/26
- (e) the Parish Council Forward Look of projects
- (f) the precept amount to be submitted to Cheshire West and Chester.

The RFO outlined the discussions at Finance Committee.

The Committee had noted that maintenance costs were forecast £2,000 higher than budget, while projects were underspent by a similar amount and recommended virements to budgets accordingly. The Committee also noted that there was an expected surplus of £6,000 at year end which could be transferred to reserves.

The Committee had reviewed and noted the Quarter 3 budget report.

The Committee had given detailed consideration to the draft budget, presented by the RFO. The November 2024 annual CPI inflation figure of 2.6% had been applied where appropriate to establish a budget for 25/26, or other amounts if required. The Committee recognised the ongoing commitments of the Council particularly to the Recreation Area with ageing equipment and recommended an increase to the maintenance area budget to £5k and the general maintenance to £3k to allow for any contract price increases.

The Committee considered the updated forward look of projects and recommended the current projects for 2025/26:

- Defib at Bowling Club – £1.5k allocated to 2025/26 for the Defib at the Bowling Club.
- VE Day – the 80th Anniversary of VE Day was 8th May 2025 and Members had agreed the Beacon lighting and a commemorative event and supported the allocation of £1k in the budget.

- To bring forward the replacement infant slide from 26/27 to 25/26, at an increased cost of £10k (rather than £8k) to reflect inflation and a larger unit than that being replaced.
- To provide for improvements to seating in the Teen Shelter at a budget cost of £1k.

The list of projects contained a forward look beyond 2027/28 and the Committee approved the updated list for recommendation to the Parish Council. A project to resurface the car park in 27/28 at a cost of £20k was recommended for inclusion. Members discussed the noticeboard at Gibb Hill for which the sum of £1k was included in the Projects Forward Look for a future year; it was noted that the noticeboard had now broken and was no longer able to be repaired. CWAC Councillor Marshall advised that the Ward Members' budget was still open for applications and it was agreed to apply for part funding from this budget and purchase a replacement during the current financial year.

The RFO took Members through the precept calculation with examples showing the impact of keeping the precept the same as the previous year; keeping the Band D charge the same as the previous year; a 2.6% increase to the precept and a 2.6% increase to the Band D charge.

The Committee recognised the ongoing commitments of the Council particularly to the Recreation Area with ageing equipment together with the new focus on organising a small number of events to enhance community life including those this year - the D Day Beacon Lighting and Commemorative event and the Christmas Brass Band concert; both events had been provided free of charge and enjoyed by residents. It was agreed to recommend an increase in the precept of 2.6% to £28,129.

(25/03) RESOLVED: that

- (a) The draft minutes of Finance Committee be noted.
- (b) The Quarter 3 budget report be noted.
- (c) The Parish Council budget 2025/26 as submitted be approved.
- (d) The Parish Council Projects Forward Look be approved.
- (e) The precept amount of £28,129 be submitted to Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- (f) The Clerk will submit an application to the CWAC Ward Members for funding towards the cost of a replacement noticeboard at Gibb Hill.

6. Cheshire West and Chester Councillors update

Councillor Marshall explained that starting later this month, the Ward Councillors would provide a monthly written summary of various matters relating to CWAC; Members welcomed this initiative.

He then updated on various matters including:

- Changes to Winter Fuel Payments (WFP) – he suggested this could impact 60k residents and there may be reluctance to claim the benefits which would help with eligibility for WFP. Councillors Johnston and McDermott said they had held free advice and support sessions in the Comberbach Memorial Hall but there had been no residents in attendance.
- Changes to Inheritance Tax and the impact on farmers and businesses in the rural communities.
- VAT on private schools which he was concerned could increase pressure on the non-fee paying school sector.
- The Local Government financial settlement had been announced but was for one year only. It was hoped that multi-year settlements would be announced in the future which would help councils with their future financial planning.
- The new National Planning Policy Framework outputs were awaited following the consultation the previous year.
- He had met the new Director of Place Kathy McCardle and had discussions on various Ward matters including Winnington Bridge and the previous unsuccessful bid for Government funding, a further meeting would take place the following week.
- Discussions about devolution were ongoing. He said the Conservative Group on CWAC and the Leader of the Conservative Group on Cheshire East Council, had written a joint letter to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in support of devolution but suggesting a delay to 2027, which would also coincide with local elections which they felt could have a positive impact on turnout.
- Members' budgets remained open as explained above.
- The consultation on Hynet had recently ended on the project to deliver a hydrogen pipeline network to produce, transport and store low carbon hydrogen and capture and lock away carbon dioxide emissions from industry in the North West and North Wales. He said the proposals would provide carbon capture for 25 years but it was unclear what would then follow.
- There were various highways issues across the Ward which had been raised with the Director of Place and she was to undertake a site visit. Her area of responsibility included highways, planning, environment and regeneration.
- There was a Councillor Portal for CWAC Councillors to report issues via a triage system. Councillor Marshall said there were issues with the portal with Members sometimes having to chase up a response or getting a response saying no action was to be taken on the issue they had raised. He said he was to request that the portal be reviewed.
- Councillor Marshall referred to the email sent to the Ward Councillors raising various issues. This had been escalated to the Chief Executive. Members of the Parish Council reiterated their frustration with lack of service to residents and requested that a further meeting of Parish Council representatives and senior CWAC Directors including the Director of Place be arranged, similar to the meeting with the Chief Executive in 2024; this could include a review of the actions and outcomes of that meeting.

7. Recreation Area and Pump Track

7.1 The inspection report for December was noted; there were two issues identified – the repair to the gate which had been approved at the previous meeting; and an issue with the zip wire mechanism which was subsequently repaired by Shane Ross.

7.2 The Chairman reported that he had undertaken a site visit that day and the equipment was in good order. The zip wire mechanism was stuck again, and Shane Ross would be asked to address.

(25/04) RESOLVED: that the update and recent inspection be noted.

8. Highways and Streetscene

8.1 The Chairman referred to flooding issues on Cogshall Lane. This issue had previously been investigated by CWAC Highways and remedial action recommended to a homeowner. Members noted that a similar situation had occurred at Anderton and felt the same process could be implemented.

(25/05) RESOLVED: that the homeowner be contacted to ascertain whether they have carried out the action recommended by CWAC Highways and if so, CWAC be contacted to request whether the process that occurred at Anderton can be introduced.

9. Accounts and financial matters

9.1 The accounts for 30 December 2024 were listed in Appendix 1.

9.2 The list of payments was in Appendix 2.

9.3 The Finance Committee had recommended that a replacement laptop be purchased for the RFO with a budget of £800.

(25/06) RESOLVED: that:

(a) The accounts in Appendix 1 with a balance of £15,571.42 and £28,916.95 in reserves be noted.

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

(c) The budget of £800 for a replacement laptop for the RFO be approved.

10. Projects

10.1 The 80th Anniversary of VE Day was on 8th May. Members discussed commemorations including lighting the Beacon, a display and brass band concert. Councillor McDermott had contacted Cheshire Archives and requested any documents relevant to Comberbach. It was agreed that residents could also be asked if they had any items. She also referred to the Lamps of Peace which could be

displayed at a number of points around the village. Members felt an event on 8th May would be preferable or Sunday 11th May subject to room availability.

10.2 A reminder had been included in the Newsletter about a further Defib training session in the new year which would be free of charge for residents; it was hoped this would encourage increased take up.

(25/07) RESOLVED: that the 80th Anniversary of VE Day be considered further at the next meeting, reference will be included in the Village Newsletter seeking any memorabilia from residents and the Clerk will investigate room availability at the Memorial Hall on 8th May and availability of the Brass Band.

11. Planning

11.1 Planning decisions were listed in Appendix 3; the Clerk updated on a number of recent decisions and these would be listed on the next agenda.

11.2 There were no enforcement matters.

(25/08) RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

12. Correspondence

The list of correspondence had been circulated.

(25/09) RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.

13. Representative Reports

- Comberbach Memorial Hall Management Committee – Councillor McDermott said no issues had been raised with her.
- Police Liaison – the update from the PCSO had been circulated. Councillor Chandler was to attend a meeting on 22nd January hosted by Dan Price, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire.
- Comberbach Fete – a new Fete Committee had now been formed.
- School Liaison – Councillor McDermott had contacted the Headteacher and there were no issues to raise with the Parish Council.

13. Future meeting dates

The Council considered a proposed schedule of meeting dates.

(25/10) RESOLVED: that the proposed dates be approved – 13 May, 15 July, 9 September, 28 October, 2 December, 13 January 2026 and 10 March 2026.

14. Exclusion of Public and Press – Part 2

(25/11) 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 item of business due to the confidential nature of the matters to be discussed.

15. Recreation Area Inspections

The Council considered a Service Level Agreement with Northwich Town Council for 3 x inspections of the recreation area for 2025-26.

(25/12) RESOLVED: that the SLA with Northwich Town Council for 2025 – 26 be approved.

The Meeting closed at 8.40pm.

The next meeting of Comberbach Parish Council will be on Tuesday 11 March 2025 at 6.45pm.

Signed
Chairman

Appendix 1 Accounts for 30 December 2024

Current account	£15,571.42	Reserve	£28,916.95
Cash book	£44,488.37	Reconciliation:	0

Appendix 2 Payments

Item	Amount	Power
HMRC – PAYE Q3 24/25	£342.80	LGA 1972 s 111
HAGS-SMP Ltd – Inv 100037, Zipwire beam	£158.40	LGA 1972 s 111
D French – Expenses to 26/11/24	£40.05	LGA 1972 s 111
J Johnston, drinks for 23 Nov event	£75.50	LGA 1972 s 111
Shane Ross – Inv 24-03, grounds maintenance	£600.00	LGA 1972 s 111

Pre-Authorised Payments

Item	Amount	Power
PAP2418, A Woodcock - Christmas Tree Dec 24	£190.00	LGA 1972 s 137
DD – Babble, MS Office license Nov 24	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Oct 24	£7.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license Dec 24	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Nov 24	£7.50	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
24/00595/FUL - Relocation of existing equine building and the siting of a new stable block with access track and hardstanding area Land Off Senna Lane, Comberbach	26 February 2024	Awaiting decision
24/02049/FUL – single storey garden room, 11 Kennelwood Road	12 July 2024	Awaiting decision
24/01734/FUL - Demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings, including removal of the mobile home, and the erection of a	27 June 2024	Awaiting decision

replacement dwelling - Brookside Farm, Cogshall Lane		
24/03284/TPO - 1x Maple - crown reduce by 1m back to previous cuts. 2 x Oak - crown reduce by 1.5m back to previous cuts and crown lift to 5m. Small area of field Maples - reduce back into former hedgerow – 2 Freshfields	4 November 2024	Awaiting decision
24/03344/FUL - Single storey side and rear extension including alterations to roof and installation of rooflights - 57 Senna Lane	7 November 2024	Awaiting decision