

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council held on Tuesday 13 May 2025

Present

Councillors:

Jill Johnston (Chairman in the Chair)

Bill Briggs

Sandy Cameron

John Darwin

Bob Holt

Val McDermott

John Ryder

Denise French (Clerk)

Stephen Penwill (RFO)

Also present:

CWAC Councillor Lynn Gibbon

The Meeting started at 6.45pm.

Public Open Forum

No members of the public present.

1. Appointment of Chairman

(25/24) RESOLVED: that Councillor J Johnston be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year. Councillor Johnston signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Councillor R Chandler due to family reasons.

3. Appointment of Vice Chairman

(25/25) RESOLVED: that Councillor S Cameron be appointed Vice Chairman for the ensuing year. Councillor Cameron signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

4. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

5. Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 11 March 2025

(25/26) RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 11 March 2025 be approved as a correct record.

6. Progress Reports and Updates

6.1 Resilience Plan – the Resilience Plan had been sent to the Joint Emergency Planning Team. There was no feedback at the moment. The Clerk would set up a What's App Group to use should an emergency occur. The Clerk agreed to seek advice on the frequency of a review. She would also check the current plan for any updates based on the new Chairman and Vice Chairman's details.

6.2 The Defib training had taken place on 22 March with good attendance.

(25/27) RESOLVED: that the Clerk make any required amendments to the Resilience Plan and liaise with the CWAC Joint Emergency Planning Team Coordinator around the frequency of a review.

7. Cheshire West and Chester Councillors update

Councillor Gibbon would share the written Marbury Ward update by email for the Clerk to circulate. Councillor Gibbon updated on the following matters:

- National Planning Policy Framework – a formal response to the NPPF was awaited but Planning Policy Guidance had identified that some areas of Green Belt would be reclassified as Grey Belt. Cllr Gibbon said there was concern that this would remove protection and result in villages and settlements merging with each other.
- A consultation was underway about pharmacies.
- She had observed speeding and traffic issues on Cogshall Lane and suggested the SID could be placed there to assess traffic speeds.
- An open day was to take place on 1 July regarding the planning application for a Solar Farm at Winnington.
- She referred to the latest round of Crowd Funding with two opportunities to apply with closing dates in June and October, there were also various other funding opportunities.
- She said a number of parishes were developing or reviewing their Parish Plan and asked whether Comberbach had produced one? This was different to a Neighbourhood Plan and looked at wider aspects around what the community felt was important for their parish.
- She had asked the Head of Planning about the number of enforcement cases in Marbury Ward and he had advised there were 39 open cases.
- Devolution proposals were ongoing.

8. Recreation Area and Pump Track

8.1 Members considered the annual Rospa Inspection Report. The inspector had suggested cable ties be fitted on the top of the swing support bars as a deterrent to birds. The inspector had also commented on the basket swing and distance from the support bars; this would be checked with the manufacturer and clarification sought

with the inspector about the regulation that she was referencing. Members agreed to consider future inspections at Finance Committee later in the year.

8.2 Members discussed a project to replace the infant slide unit at the Recreation Area and any potential funding sources. The Chairman referred to a training session on writing funding applications organised by Cheshire Community Action which she felt could be beneficial. It was agreed to consider possible funding sources at the next meeting along with any feedback from the training session.

(25/28) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The recent inspection report be noted.
- (b) The recommendations in the Rospa report be progressed and a bird deterrent be fixed to the top of the swing support bars and the Clerk will investigate the issue raised about the basket swing.
- (c) The future Rospa annual inspection be considered at Finance Committee on 7 October 2025.
- (d) The Chairman and the RFO attend the CCA training plus one other councillor if available.
- (e) A report be submitted to the next meeting on potential funding sources for the project to replace the infant slide unit at the Recreation Area.

9. Highways and Streetscene

9.1 Highways and pothole repairs – the Clerk had written to the CWAC Head of Highways regarding highways and pothole repairs and her reply had been circulated. Members noted the ‘report it’ function for highways issues on Cheshire East Council’s website was more detailed and informative. Councillor Gibbon said she was attending a CWAC Scrutiny Committee meeting the following day and would raise this issue.

9.2 Replacement sign on Hough Lane – the Clerk had raised this issue with the CWAC Ward Councillors in January, the signs had been reported in April 2024 but had still not been replaced. The response from CWAC Highways was that the replacement signs on Hough Lane had not been fitted in 2024 – 25 due to budget constraints but were due to be actioned in the summer. Councillor Gibbon said she would also seek information on the budget for signs at the Scrutiny Committee.

9.3 Speed Indicator Device – the latest SID data was noted.

(25/29) RESOLVED: That the highways update be noted.

10. Accounts and financial matters

10.1 The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 15 April were noted, there was one correction which the Clerk would make prior to submitting to the next meeting of Finance Committee.

10.2 The Quarter 4 budget review was considered. The RFO reported that the precept had now been received and he had submitted and received the VAT reclaim. Members agreed the transfer of £8,000 to the savings account.

10.3 Members considered the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) including:

- (a) the Internal Auditor's Report
- (b) the Annual Governance Statement
- (c) the Accounting Statements
- (d) the publication period.

The Internal Auditor had issued a 'clean' audit and made no recommendations.

10.4 Members considered an amendment to bank signatories to bring them up to date. It was agreed to add Councillor Cameron to the signatory list and remove former councillor J Bradley.

10.5 The Council had a 5 year deal with Zurich for insurance cover and the year 2025 – 26 was year 4. The renewal for the year was £710, which was a decrease on the previous year and compared favourably with the budget amount of £900.

10.6 The Council considered a report on appointments to various Council committees and outside bodies.

10.7 Members considered the appointments for internal audit and payroll to the end of May 2026. It was noted that the fee to Shires for payroll services had increased by 14% and agreed to consider future payroll services at Finance Committee on 7 October.

10.8 The accounts for 30 April 2025 were listed in Appendix 1

10.9 The list of payments was in Appendix 2.

(25/30) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The minutes of Finance Committee held on 15 April be received and noted, subject to one correction.
- (b) The quarter 4 budget review be noted.
- (c) The Annual Governance Statement be approved.
- (d) The Accounting Statements be approved.
- (e) The dates for the period of the exercise of public rights from 3 June – 14 July be noted.

(f) Councillor Cameron be added to the list of bank signatories and former councillor Bradley be removed.

(g) The insurance premium for the current year be noted.

(h) The Terms of Reference for Finance Committee were approved.

(i) The membership of Finance Committee be confirmed as Councillors Briggs, Cameron, Johnston, McDermott and Ryder.

(j) The Terms of Reference for Staffing Committee be approved.

(k) The membership of Staffing Committee be confirmed as Councillors Cameron, Johnston (Chairman) and Ryder.

(j) The arrangements for dealing with Planning applications be confirmed:

The current arrangements are that the Clerk has delegated power to respond to planning applications by taking soundings from members of the Planning Committee which will be given due consideration when drafting the response. If Members of the Committee do not agree on their response or the application would have a serious impact on the community then the application will be considered by the Parish Committee.

(k) The membership of Planning Committee be confirmed as Councillors R Chandler, J Darwin, R Holt and J Ryder

(l) The following representatives be appointed:

- Comberbach Memorial Hall Management Committee – Councillor McDermott
- Fete Committee – Councillor Ryder
- Bowling Club – Councillor Darwin
- Police Liaison – Councillor Chandler
- School Liaison – Councillor McDermott

(m) The appointment of JDH Business Services for internal audit and Shires for payroll services be approved, up to the end of May 2026 and appointments for the following year be considered at Finance Committee on 7 October 2025.

(n) The accounts in Appendix 1 with a balance of £38,762.26 and £28,916.95 in reserves be noted.

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

11. Projects

11.1 The VE Day 80th Anniversary celebration had taken place on 8 May 2025. This had included a display of WWII artifacts, refreshments and a performance of music from the era by Barnton Silver Band in the Memorial Hall. Attendees had then moved outdoors to hear the reading of the names of those from Comberbach who had lost their lives in both world wars, the reading of the VE Day Tribute and watch the lighting of the Beacon and Lamplight of Peace. The event had been well attended and there had been very positive feedback from residents.

11.2 Members discussed whether a 'Men in Sheds' project would be relevant in Comberbach. The shed behind the Memorial Hall had power and was a potential location. It was noted that there were similar projects in Hartford and Winsford. Councillor Darwin agreed to do research and report back to the next meeting of the Parish Council. The idea could also be promoted in the Village Newsletter.

11.3 Members discussed the current position with the project to replace Hopyards Bridge. CWAC had agreed to maintain a new bridge but not to fund the cost of the replacement. It was understood that Marbury swimming club were willing to make a donation and Anderton with Marbury Parish Council (AwMPC) were also considering a donation. The Friends of Anderton and Marbury were considering funding options and CWAC Cllr Gibbon explained she had suggested to AwMPC that this could be a project for Cheshire West Crowd Funding. The actual cost of any replacement bridge was not known at this time.

(25/31) RESOLVED: that

- (a) The update on VE Day be noted.
- (b) A donation of £100 be offered to the WI for the cakes they donated at the VE Day event.
- (c) A Christmas concert be considered at the next meeting but Barnton Silver Band be approached for availability in December.
- (d) The Men in Sheds project be considered at the next meeting.
- (e) The Parish Council supports in principle the replacement for Hopyards Bridge as the benefits to the community are recognised but would like more information on costs.

12. Planning

12.1 Planning decisions were listed in Appendix 3.

12.2 There were no enforcement matters.

The Clerk reminded Members that there was a CWAC Connections event about planning on 22 May. CWAC Cllr Gibbon said the Head of Planning had also offered to attend parish council meetings.

(25/32) RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

13. Correspondence

The list of correspondence had been circulated.

(25/33) RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.

14. Representative Reports

- Comberbach Memorial Hall Management Committee – Councillor McDermott said no issues had been raised with her.
- Police Liaison – the updates from the PCSO had been circulated. It was noted that there had been one speeding enforcement but it was unclear what this involved, the Clerk agreed to contact the PCSO for details.
- Comberbach Fete – Councillor Ryder reported that the Sundowner race had taken place on 9 May and had been well attended. Some of the VE Day memorabilia would be displayed at the Fete.
- School Liaison – Councillor McDermott had liaised with the school about the VE Day commemorations and some pupils had drawn pictures which had been on display at the event on 8 May.
- Bowling Club – the new season was progressing well and the Club was pleased with the VE Day celebrations.

15. Exclusion of Public and Press – Part 2

(25/34) 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 matter to be discussed.

16. Comberbach Achievement Award

The Council considered the recipient of the annual Parish Council Award.

(25/35) RESOLVED: That the recipient of the Award be approved as discussed at the meeting.

17. Pickleball

Members discussed whether there were options for a pickleball facility in the village. The use of the MUGA was considered but it was felt this could limit its use by young people. Councillor McDermott agreed to investigate options.

(25/36) RESOLVED: That options for a pickleball facility be discussed at the next meeting.

The Meeting closed at 8.50pm.

The next meeting of Comberbach Parish Council will be on Tuesday 15 July 2025 at 6.30pm.

Signed
Chairman

Appendix 1 Accounts for 30 April 2025

Current account	£38,762.26	Reserve	£28,916.95
Cash book	£67,679.21	Reconciliation:	0

Appendix 2 Payments

Item	Amount	Power
CHALC – Subscription 25/26	£296.79	LGA 1972 s 111
MCFS – Subscription 25/26	£8.00	LGA 1972 s 111
SLCC – RFO Subscription 25/26 Inv MEM253942-1	£80.00	LGA 1972 s 111
Shane Ross – Gate installation, Inv 25	£78.75	LGA 1972 s 111
JDH Business Services – Int Audit Apr 25 Inv 5113	£348.00	LGA 1972 s 111
Playsafety Ltd – ROSPA inspection Inv 87375	£124.80	LGA 1972 s 111
Shires – Payroll Services 25/26 Inv SHI-2739	£361.80	LGA 1972 s 111
Parish Noticeboard Co – Gibb Hill n/b Inv 11934	£732.00	LGA 1972 s 111
Zurich Municipal – Insurance 25/26 Inv 544179772	£709.96	LGA 1972 s 111
J Ryder – reimburse SID batteries (Plymouth Battery Centre Inv 32597)	£171.12	LGA 1972 s 111
D French – Expenses to 03/05/25	£142.44	LGA 1972 s 111

Pre-Authorised Payments

Item	Amount	Power
PAP2421 - HMRC, PAYE Q4	£317.60	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2422 – Synchroprint, CVN Mar 25	£232.32	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2501 – J Ryder, maintenance costs	£302.27	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license Jan 25	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license Feb 25	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license Mar 25	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license Apr 25	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Dec 24	£7.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Jan 25	£7.50	LGA 1972 s 111

DD – Tesco Mobile, Feb 25	£7.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Mar 25	£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
25/00071/FUL - Single storey side extension, front canopy porch, alterations to window/door openings, partial cladding/render finish to elevations – 5 Broadacre	3 February 2025	Awaiting decision
25/00751/TPO – felling of oak, 11 Reedsmere Walk	7 March 2025	Awaiting decision

25/00823/FUL – single storey rear extension, The Croft	14 March 2025	Awaiting decision
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