

Comberbach Annual Parish Meeting

Comberbach Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2024 - 2025

13th May 2025

After 8 years in the Chair, I will be standing down so as the Parish Council can elect a new Chair for the coming year, and to take us forward to the new elections in 2027. I would personally like to thank all Councillors for their support over the last 8 years and comment on the excellent work done by Denise French and Stephen Penwill as Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer respectively.

Comberbach Community

We continue to see a wonderful Community Spirit around the village and the Community Facebook pages continue to bear testament to this.

We continue to receive positive comments from new villagers on the wonderful community spirit in the village and its testament to the recreation area on how many visitors use the facilities from the surrounding area. Marbury Country Park cannot go unnoticed for such a wonderful facility within walking distance of the village

The D Day celebrations last year together with the Christmas Carol concert were well attended and many commented on the fact that the Parish Council was working for the community. Special mention to Barnton Brass Band for their medley of music.

The VE Day celebrations only last week again showed the extent of the Community Spirit.

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 would also like to thank our 3 Ward Councillors Lynn Gibbon, Norman Wright and Phil Marshall for their continued support and grants towards the infant swing and new noticeboard located on The Avenue.

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, 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 2023-24 at the meeting on 10th January 2023. the Council recommended an increase of 10%. The new precept amount of £26,110.00. The funds received have been managed pro-actively to try and reduce external costs wherever

possible through good financial management, and to take into consideration the costs for the replacement of recreational equipment which is now 20 years old since installation. It is worthy of note that the Parish Council has spent over £90,000 in new or replacement assets since 2014

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 2024/25

- Replacement of infant swings with additional seats
- Replacement of 4 zip line legs and 2 cross members
- Replacement of cross member for junior slide
- Installation of a new self-closing gate
- Replacement defibrillator at Post Office to support both adult and child
- Removal of pencils and repair to wet pour
- Replacement noticeboard on The Avenue

Examples of expenditure to be spent in future years including 2025/26

- Replacement of recreation area equipment including
 - Slide and climbing tower £50,000 minimum
 - Infant slide and tower £15,000
 - Revised seating for teen shelter

Freedom Fibre

It was disappointing to be advised by Freedom Fibre that due to the fact, that take up for the service in the village was far less than anticipated, and that they had called a halt to build the network on the outskirts until residents had expressed their interest in moving to the service.

From a personal perspective, the service is 100% quicker and more reliable than the copper wire previously.

Comberbach Village News

Many thanks, yet again 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.

A big thank you to Kath for all her hard work over the years, who has now stood down. Special thanks to Claire Holt who has taken over the role as Editor

CW&C

Highways

Marbury Road

In March/April last year we saw the resurface of Marbury Road as well as a stone and tar resurface between Marbury Road and Soot Hill.

Gibb Hill

We finally saw the resurface of Gibb Hill in late September. This resulted in a full resurface and removal of 110mm of road surface and undercarriage. This work could only be completed after the repair of the underground leak/stream at the top of Gibb Hill identified as in need of repair in January 2024. The Parish Council and Antrobus PC had been writing letters since 2022 to request remedial action on the original poor quality of the previous resurface.

During 2023 and 2024 over 100 potholes were repaired as well as Dept of Transport funding for 38 large areas of patching work in line with CW&C's asset management principles.

If Highways had taken a more proactive approach to the quality of the original resurface, DfT funding could have been used on other road priorities.

Pot Hole repairs.

The "Report It" CW&C web site allows residents to report pot holes which are considered dangerous in between the statutory 3-month Highways inspection.

However, it's noted that there is considerable inefficiency in repairing the pot holes once "white Lined". Not all are completed at the same time in the same vicinity resulting in additional costs for transport and manpower.

Gullies

The web site was upgraded in May to show more detail as to when gullies were last cleansed and the date of the next cleansing. In September last year it was noted that there were inaccuracies of the data detailing the scheduled date of cleansing. Following the intervention of the Ward Councillors a report from CW&C stated: -

"The Kaarbontech system is new to both CW&C and our contractor Colas, and we have yet to complete our first full cycle. There are some issues still to be addressed within the

system, and we are looking to improve the ad-hoc work reporting within the system. Also, we are aware of an issue where the next programmed date is not always being displayed and this should be fixed soon”

As of writing this annual report the system is still not fit for purpose

Grass cutting and Weed Control

Grass cutting and Weed Control schedules were not met during the season either due to poor maintenance or lack of machinery. It was necessary to chase CW&C to ascertain when works would be completed

CW&C Local Plan Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

The Chairman and Vice Chair attended the Parish Council drop in event on the Local Plan.

It was confirmed by CW&C planners at the event that Comberbach was protected under the current Green Belt provisions. It was also explained that there was sufficient land availability in Cheshire West and Chester to meet the next 5 years housing demand. CW&C was developing a new Design Code and any village design statement would need to be in line with the CW&C Local Plan Design Code.

Village Speed initiative

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

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.

The data shows that over 85% of drivers are within the banding of below 35 mph

We continue to supply data to the PCSO and Cheshire Police detailing when speeding traffic is most prevalent.

Recreation Area & Pump Track

The facilities are well used by residents and children from the village and surrounding area.

The Pump Track has been a tremendous asset and is used by all ages. As well as scooters, BMX bikes, balance bikes etc, I regularly see parents, grandparents and children walking and running around the track and have seen radio-controlled cars circumventing the humps and bumps.

We have now had other Council’s request information on how we went about the project.

It has to be realised that the equipment is now 22 years old and is coming to its end of life, but with careful maintenance we can extend its life to allow reserves to be built up for replacement equipment.

In the 24/25 financial year replacement HAGS equipment and repairs by NTC to zip line and new tyre plus the removal of the pencils following advise from the ROSPA annual report was in excess of £4,000

The Finance Committee has approved a budget for 2025 to review the replacement of the Infant slide.

D Day Celebrations

Celebrations included a talk by John Hardy of his childhood memories, lighting of The Beacon, Tea Coffee and cakes together with a D Day celebration event held at the Memorial Hall on the Sunday which included Barnton Brass Band, memorabilia and a Talbot car used during the war.

Christmas Carol Concert

Many thanks to Barnton Brass Band for their participation and the residents who came along and expressed their thanks for the Parish Council on organising the event.

Defibrillator Training

Special thanks to Doctors Neil and Sandra Fisher for giving up their time to attend a drop-in session at the Memorial Hall where a number of residents and Parish Councillors attended, to learn more about how you assist in using a defibrillator.

Your Council

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.

Thank You

John Ryder