

Minutes of a Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council's Finance Committee held on Tuesday 15 April 2025

Present

Councillor J Johnston (in the Chair)

Councillors:

W Briggs

S Cameron

V McDermott

Denise French (Clerk)

Stephen Penwill (RFO)

The Meeting started at 4.00pm.

1. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Ryder.

2. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee held on 7 January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

4. Q4 24-25 Budget Review.

The Committee considered the Q4 budget review. The net accumulative balance was £3,868.74 which was partly due to the receipt of a donation from the Fete Committee towards marquee hire for the fete in June 2025. The RFO explained that the budget allocation towards car park resurfacing had been re-allocated to pay for the Defib by the Post Office and community events.

Members queried the overspend in IT software costs which the RFO explained was the cost of the Microsoft licence and Scribe, the accountancy package.

RESOLVED: that the update be received and noted.

5. To approve the transfer from current to savings accounts of £8,000

The RFO explained that there was £9,400 remaining at year end in the current account. He recommended the transfer of £8,000 to the savings account for earmarked reserves. He added that he would soon be submitting a VAT reclaim which would result in the Parish Council receiving £2,000. The council had instant access to its savings.

RESOLVED: that the committee recommends the transfer of £8,000 from the current account to the savings account.

6. End of year Internal Audit and Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

The RFO explained the AGAR process to the Committee. One of the requirements was to submit an explanation of the variances from the previous year and the completed form was shared with the committee; the RFO explained that the difference in income was due to a high VAT claim of £6k the previous year. He also explained that there was a 6-week period of public inspection where an elector could inspect the council's accounts; this would start on 3 June 2025.

RESOLVED: that the committee recommends that the AGAR form be approved for submission to the External Auditor.

7. Managing Parish Council savings

The RFO explained that the Parish Council held a current account with Santander. This was an easy to use banking process with a mobile banking option and the requirement for one signatory only; any expenditure was in accordance with the council's internet banking policy which had appropriate safeguards in place. The council also held some savings in a separate account with a low rate of interest but could not access the Santander 2.5% one year fixed rate savings account due to the council's status as a community organisation. The RFO had explored alternative options for savings including moving the council's finances to Unity Bank which had better savings rates but included a monthly admin fee. The Clerk was aware of a number of councils who invested with CCLA but this did not appear to have FSA protection. Members discussed a wish to make ethical investments and suggested Triodos Bank. The Clerk agreed to also seek the advice of Chalc.

RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The RFO investigates savings options including ethical investments and submits a report to the July meeting of the Committee and the Parish Council.
- (b) The Clerk seeks the advice of Chalc on savings products recommended by other local councils.

8. Crowd Funding

Councillors Johnston, McDermott and the Clerk had attended a CWAC briefing at which mention had been made of funding opportunities via crowd funding. There were two rounds of applications with deadlines of 4 June 2025 and 6 October 2025. All applications had to show relevance to the objectives and priorities and must be supported by 20 individual backers. There were two separate funds for which applications could be submitted – a Community Fund and a Climate Emergency

Fund. Members felt the slide replacement unit should be the project that was progressed via the Crowd Funding scheme. Members also felt future projects for consideration for either crowd funding or other funding schemes could be an EV charging point at the Memorial Hall and a Men in Sheds project.

RESOLVED: that

- (a) The committee recommends the Council submits an application to CWAC Crowd Funding by the deadline of 6 October 2025 for a replacement to the infant slide.
- (b) The council undertakes a site visit and explores the feasibility of a Men in Sheds project for Comberbach.

9. Infant slide at the Recreation Area

The committee considered a replacement to the infant slide as above. A site visit took place with a play equipment company who suggested an indicative price for a replacement multi-play unit would be around £13k. Members also discussed alternative sources of funding such as FCC and Manchester Airport Community Trust Fund.

RESOLVED: the replacement for the infant slide be considered at the Parish Council meeting including sources of funding.

10. Pickleball facility

The Chairman suggested exploring the provision of a pickleball facility which could be added into the MUGA – it would need additional lines to be painted and a removable net. Members felt this could be difficult to manage as the MUGA was frequently used by children and should remain available for younger residents as a priority.

RESOLVED: that possible alternative sites for a pickleball facility be considered at the Parish Council meeting.

11. Future Chair of Finance Committee

Councillor Cameron said he would be happy to take the role of Chairman for the Committee for 2025 – 26. This would be agreed at the next meeting of the committee.

- 12. Date of next meeting – the next meeting will be on Tuesday 8 July at 4.00pm.

The Meeting closed at 5.05pm

Cllr J Johnston (in the Chair)