

Minutes of the Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council held on Tuesday 15 July 2025

Present

Councillors:

Jill Johnston (Chairman in the Chair)

Bill Briggs

Richard Chandler

John Darwin

John Ryder

Denise French (Clerk)

Stephen Penwill (RFO)

Also present:

CWAC Councillor Lynn Gibbon

PCSO Di Wiggins

The Meeting started at 6.30pm.

Public Open Forum

No members of the public present.

PCSO Di Wiggins updated, there were no issues in Comberbach. She had undertaken speed monitoring on Gibb Hill.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Councillors S Cameron, R Holt and V McDermott due to family reasons.

2. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 13 May 2025

(25/37) RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 13 May 2025 be approved as a correct record.

4. Progress Reports and Updates

4.1 Resilience Plan – the Resilience Plan had been sent to the Joint Emergency Planning Team. There was no feedback at the moment.

5. Cheshire West and Chester Councillors update

The Clerk had circulated the written Marbury Ward update by email. Councillor Gibbon updated on the following matters:

- Residents Survey 2025 – they were to conduct a resident's survey across Marbury before the end of the year to understand both Local and National concerns and help set their priorities within the Ward. It would be available online and a paper copy would be delivered too.
- Highways Maintenance Trial Community Led Improvements – the Ward Councillors had requested this pilot scheme to give communities more influence over small but noticeable highways issues. Parish Councils had been asked to identify priorities and a CWAC contractor team (two operatives and a vehicle) would be available to do minor maintenance tasks that did not require additional materials like tarmac.
- Devolution – Cheshire & Warrington – discussion and planning continued for the potential devolution deal for Cheshire East, Cheshire West & Chester and Warrington (Cheshire & Warrington) in 2026. The decision to proceed with the proposed devolution deal would require full support from all three councils and there would be a vote in September. The Ward Members were supportive in principle of devolving more powers locally to enable better decision-making but felt the scope and funding remained unclear. They were also concerned about the timescale and had expressed a preference that elections were held in May 2027 to allow more time and be aligned with the local elections in Cheshire West and Chester.
- Local Plan – CWAC was currently out to consultation on the Issues and Options document which was the first formal stage in preparing a new Local Plan for the borough. Views were sought on
 - The vision and objectives for the new Local Plan
 - How and where future development should be located
 - Three possible spatial options to deliver around 29,000 new homes and 150 hectares of employment land over a 15-year period
 - Proposed updates to existing Local Plan policies
 - Potential areas for growth around local settlements
- Winnington Lime Bed Solar Farm – this application had been subject to a planning appeal held on 1 July. The Marbury Councillors had attended to make formal representations about their concerns. The decision was awaited.
- Weaver Square - a preferred development partner for Weaver Square had been agreed by CWAC Cabinet on 9 July 2025.
- Northwich Market - Update & Design Progress – a project design team had begun the detailed design phase which was expected to take 10–12 weeks to complete.
- Northwich Library – work was ongoing and the library was due to re-open in 2026. In the interim, the library had been relocated to Weaver Hall Museum. The museum/library was holding various events throughout summer.
- Highways – improvement works were continuing on the A559 & A49, with additional replacements of signage and Chevrons.
- Local Transport Plan – CWAC were consulting on the plan for the future of transport in the borough with various public consultation events and online webinars during the consultation period which closed on 17 August.

- Members Budgets – Wincham Parish Council had successfully applied for funding towards lapel speakers to help with sound at meetings.
- Lynn explained that the Fire Authority could lend historic equipment and vehicles for display use at Fetes etc.

Councillor Ryder raised the issue of poor weed control and that the published schedule did not seem to be followed. Councillor Gibbon explained that the Head of Highways had introduced a system of forward notice to Ward Councillors of any planned works to see their views.

6. Recreation Area and Pump Track

6.1 The new inspection rota would be circulated to councillors. The regular inspection report from Northwich Town Council was awaited.

6.2 Members discussed the Rospa inspection that had identified an issue with the swing set because of the distance of the basket seat to the stanchion. This had been raised with the manufacturer and their response had been circulated. Members agreed to request the manufacturer to rectify the issue.

(25/38) RESOLVED: that Massey and Harris be contacted about the issue raised by the Rospa Inspector regarding the distance of the basket swing to the stanchion and they be requested to rectify the issue and that the Council does not want the equipment to be unavailable for more than a week due to the proximity of the school holidays.

7. Planning

7.1 Councillors Cameron, Ryder and Johnston had attended the planning session hosted by the Head of Planning, CWAC. The National Planning Policy Framework meant there was pressure on increasing the provision of residential development. The current Local Plan identified land for 500 houses per annum with delivery being above this figure at around 1k houses; there was a land supply for the next 5 – 6 years based on these figures. The new legislation required land for 2k houses per year which meant CWAC had a reduced land supply of around 2 years. A call for sites had resulted in various parcels being proposed and all land had now been mapped. Councillor Gibbon explained that where residential development took place there was sometimes S106 money available which could be used towards improvements such as additional classrooms. She also explained that for housing developments of above 10 houses, there was a requirement that 10% would be social housing. The consultation on the Local Plan ran until 29 August and Members agreed to hold a special meeting that would decide the council's response on the Local Plan proposals. It was also agreed to produce a flyer to distribute to local residents.

7.2 Planning decisions were listed in Appendix 3. It was noted that the appeal decision had been received against the refusal of an application for the demolition of

the existing dwelling and outbuildings, including removal of the mobile home, and the erection of a replacement dwelling at Brookside Farm. The appeal had been dismissed.

7.3 There were no enforcement matters. It was agreed to contact the Head of Planning about the issue of the dropped kerb that had been raised in 2024.

(25/39) RESOLVED: that

- (a) a special meeting of the Parish Council be held in August to decide the response to the CWAC Local Plan consultation
- (b) the regular planning update be noted.

8. Recreation Area – replacement of equipment

The Chairman, Councillor Ryder and the RFO had attended a useful session on writing funding bids. The council had previously agreed to develop a project to replace the infant slide unit at the Recreation Area. The potential sources of funding had been discussed at the Finance Committee and a proposal recommended to submit a Crowd Funding bid on the Space Hive platform. It was proposed to insert a flyer into the Comberbach Village News to promote the project and ask residents if they would indicate support towards the project without any commitment to donate money at this stage. The Chairman had prepared an indicative timetable to enable an application to be submitted by the deadline in October.

(25/40) RESOLVED: that

- (a) The application for Crowd Funding via the Space Hive platform for the replacement to the infant slide unit be confirmed.
- (b) A flyer for distribution with the CVN be approved.
- (c) The Chairman, Councillors Darwin and Ryder and the RFO be authorised to prepare a funding bid for the project.

9. Highways and Streetscene

Speed Indicator Device – the RFO had been unable to circulate the data in time for the meeting and would circulate it for the September meeting.

(25/41) RESOLVED: That the highways update be noted.

10. Accounts and financial matters

10.1 The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 8 July were noted.

10.2 The RFO had submitted a report on savings options and Finance Committee had recommended opening a dormant current account with Unity Trust Bank and

utilising their savings products in preference to Santander's. This would then facilitate any future move to Unity Trust for current account banking. This was supported.

10.3 The Quarter 1 budget review was considered. As requested by Finance Committee, the future reports would include a comments column to highlight any particular reasons for variances.

10.4 The Council considered the Reserves and Projects Forward Look, both had been considered by Finance Committee who had recommended that:

- (a) the general reserve be increased from £6k to £7k, which reflected 3 months of precept.
- (b) The replacement for street furniture be increased from £600 to £1k.
- (c) The Recreation Area replacement equipment be increased from £17.5k to £25k.

This would result in the total earmarked reserves being £30k, plus £7k general reserve. This was supported.

10.5 Members considered current advertising charges for Comberbach Village News and the recommendation of Finance Committee that no change be made to the charges and no discount be offered; this was because the current fees were considered reasonable. This was agreed.

10.6 Governance Documents

The Council considered:

- (a) The draft Financial Regulations; the RFO explained that the model Financial Regulations had been reissued by NALC following more recent procurement legislation, but this had not fundamentally changed the document. Finance Committee had considered the revised model and recommended adoption.
- (b) Internet Banking Policy – Finance Committee had noted that the council's bank Santander was no longer issuing the weekly transactions email and was moving to paperless statements. This would impact the audit controls in paragraph one of the current policy. It was recommended to replace this control with an agenda item that each meeting of Finance Committee would review a recent bank statement
- (c) Standing Orders – the Clerk had circulated updated Standing Orders based on the new NALC model. She proposed adding in the wording that related to the council's arrangements for dealing with planning applications as follows: "The Clerk has delegated power to respond to planning

applications by taking soundings from members of 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 at by the Parish Council". This procedure had been approved at the previous meeting and its inclusion in the Standing Orders was consistent with the current document.

- (d) Internal Control Procedures – this document had been reviewed by Finance Committee and recommended for approval without amendment.
- (e) Risk Assessment – Finance Committee had noted that some content needed to be updated including dates and the increase to £85k financial protection. An updated version was submitted to the Council for consideration.
- (f) Data Protection Policy – the Council considered the Data Protection Policy, no changes were recommended and it was approved without amendment.
- (g) Complaints Policy – the Council considered the Complaints Policy which was approved without amendment.
- (h) Grant Policy - the Council considered the Grant Policy which was approved without amendment.
- (i) Publication Scheme - the Council considered the Publication Scheme which was approved without amendment.

10.7 The accounts for 30 June 2025 were listed in Appendix 1

10.8 The list of payments was in Appendix 2 including the annual subscription to Cheshire Community Action.

(25/42) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The minutes of Finance Committee held on 8 July be received and noted.
- (b) The RFO be authorised to open a dormant current account with Unity Trust Bank to utilise their savings products.
- (c) The Quarter 1 budget review be received and noted.
- (d) The reserves list be received and the following be approved:
 - (i) the general reserve be increased from £6k to £7k, which reflected 3 months of precept.

- (ii) The replacement for street furniture be increased from £600 to £1k.
- (iii) The Recreation Area replacement equipment be increased from £17.5k to £25k.

This would result in the total earmarked reserves being £30k, plus £7k general reserve.

(e) It was agreed that the fee for advertising in the Comberbach Village News (CVN) would remain at the current rate to local advertisers of £10 per issue for a 1/6 page advert and all advertisers would be requested to pay if they wanted to continue to advertise in the CVN. The RFO would liaise with the CVN editor to establish a process to ensure advertisers were aware prior to placing an advert, and any non-payers would have adverts removed from future editions.

(f) Governance documents – the Council agreed to adopt the following:

- Financial Regulations approved as submitted and adopted.
- Internet banking policy – approved and adopted as submitted - paragraph one had been replaced with an agenda item that each meeting of Finance Committee would review a recent bank statement.
- Standing orders approved as submitted subject to the inclusion of the wording relating to how planning applications are dealt with.
- Internal controls – approved without amendment.
- Risk Assessment – approved as submitted with reference to £85k financial protection and amendment of dates where applicable.
- Data Protection Policy – approved without amendment.
- Complaints Policy - approved without amendment.
- Grant Policy - approved without amendment.
- Publication Scheme - approved without amendment.

(g) The accounts in Appendix 1 with a balance of £24,880.70 and £36,916.95 in reserves be noted.

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

11. Projects

11.1 The council considered whether to hold a celebration event for VJ Day on 15 August 2025. It was agreed to explore whether there were any display materials that

could be displayed by the Memorial and to put a post on social media and the website giving information about the date and national 2 minutes silence.

11.2 The Christmas concert had been booked for Saturday 13 December and further details would be discussed at the next meeting.

11.3 Members considered introducing a stand(s) for issuing free dog waste bags. It was felt that responsible dog owners would already take bags out with them and that there were sufficient bins for disposing of bags. It was agreed to take no action on this matter.

11.4 Members discussed a request to operate a pizza van on the car park on a weekly basis. This was a different vendor to Outback Pizza who operated one Friday a month. The Clerk had contacted the potential vendors seeking additional details but had not received a response. It was agreed to defer this to the next meeting.

11.5 Councillor McDermott had researched the option of a pickleball court within the Memorial Hall but was unable to attend this meeting. It was agreed to defer this to the next meeting.

11.6 Members discussed whether a 'Men in Sheds' project would be relevant in Comberbach. Councillor Darwin had visited the project in Hartford where the location was spacious with ample room for equipment and the group had relevant policies in place including Risk Assessments and Health and Safety procedures. The Hartford group had suggested Comberbach residents may wish to join their group. It was agreed to keep a watching brief on the topic and seek views of residents about their interest.

(25/43) RESOLVED: that

(a) No specific celebration of VJ Day is arranged but a post be put on social media and the website and items for display be explored and purchased.

(b) The arrangements for the Christmas concert be considered further at the next meeting.

(c) No action be taken on the purchase of dog waste bags.

(d) The request for a pizza van on the car park be considered further at the next meeting.

(e) The option of a pickleball facility be considered further at the next meeting.

(f) A watching brief is put on a possible Men in Sheds project and an article be considered for the CVN.

12. Correspondence

The list of correspondence had been circulated.

(25/44) RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.

13. Representative Reports

- Comberbach Memorial Hall Management Committee – no report in the absence of Councillor McDermott.
- Police Liaison – the updates from the PCSO showed no issues in Comberbach, the SID data showed one issue with speeding late at night.
- Comberbach Fete – Councillor Ryder reported that the Fete had been very successful with excellent attendance.
- School Liaison – no report in the absence of Councillor McDermott.
- Bowling Club – Councillor Darwin would suggest the Club provide an article for the CVN to promote themselves and encourage new members.

14. Exclusion of Public and Press – Part 2

None

The Meeting closed at 9.10pm.

The next meeting of Comberbach Parish Council will be on Tuesday 9 September 2025 at 6.30pm.

Signed Chairman

Appendix 1 Accounts for 30 June 2025

Current account	£24,880.70	Reserve	£36,916.95
Cash book	£61,797.65	Reconciliation:	0

Appendix 2 Payments

Item	Amount	Power
Cheshire Community Action – Subscription 25/26	£20.00	LGA 1972 s 111
BWP Creative – mailbox storage, inv 3604	£18.00	LGA 1972 s 111
J Ryder – reimburse whiteboard materials	£34.07	LGA 1972 s 111
HMRC – PAYE Q1	£317.40	LGA 1972 s 111

Pre-Authorised Payments

Item	Amount	Power
PAP2502 – J Ryder, VE Day costs	£171.05	LGA 1972 s 137
PAP2503 – V McDermott, VE Day costs	£21.55	LGA 1972 s 137
PAP2504 – Comberbach WI – donation re VE Day	£100.00	LGA 1972 s 137
PAP2505 – First Rescue, replacement defib	£1,636.80	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2506 – Synchroprint, CVN May 25	£232.32	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license May 25	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license Jun 25	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Apr 25	£7.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, May 25	£7.95	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Jun 25	£7.95	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Information Commissioners Office, ICO fee	£47.00	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))	Fri 30 Apr 2021	Awaiting decision

of planning permission 19/01832/FUL), 31 Senna Lane		
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	Approved
25/00751/TPO – felling of oak, 11 Reedsmere Walk	7 March 2025	Approved
25/00823/FUL – single storey rear extension, The Croft	14 March 2025	Approved
25/00925/FUL - alterations to existing garage to include two dormers and alterations to windows and doors to create home office and ancillary accommodation, 1 Hough Lane Cottages	9 May 2025	Awaiting decision
25/01163/FUL - Demolition of existing dwelling, erection of new dwelling, 27 Senna Lane	20 May 2025	Awaiting decision
25/01414/FUL – Front extension into existing porch area, 17 Senna Lane	3 June 2025	Awaiting decision

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