

Minutes of the Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council held on Tuesday 2 September 2025

Present

Councillors:

Jill Johnston (Chairman in the Chair)

Bill Briggs

John Darwin

Bob Holt

Val McDermott

John Ryder

Denise French (Clerk)

Stephen Penwill (RFO)

Also present:

CWAC Councillor Phil Marshall

The Meeting started at 6.30pm.

Public Open Forum

There were no members of the public present. It was agreed that future agendas and notices would request members of the public to notify the Clerk three days in advance of the meeting date of any topic that they wished to raise at a meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Councillors S Cameron and R Chandler 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 15 July 2025

(25/45) RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 15 July 2025 be approved as a correct record.

4. Progress Reports and Updates

4.1 Resilience Plan – the parish council's Resilience Plan was being considered by the Joint Cheshire Emergency Planning Team who would provide feedback by the end of the month. The Plan could then be considered at the next meeting. There was also an invitation to take part in a community resilience pilot which would involve completing a questionnaire from which a report would be produced with guidance on

how the area was progressing with Community Resilience and what actions could be taken to further increase resilience. Members agreed to consider the Resilience Plan at the next meeting and take part in the pilot project.

4.2 The Clerk reported that the pizza company who had approached the council earlier in the year about pitching their pizza van on the Memorial Hall car park, had confirmed they were no longer looking for a fixed pitch. There was no further action needed.

5. Cheshire West and Chester Councillors update

CWAC Councillor Marshall advised that a written Marbury Ward update would be produced by the end of September and circulated by email. He updated on the following matters:

- Local Plan – the consultation on the Issues and Options document had now closed. It had sought views 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.

The Ward Councillors had made a submission to the consultation including commenting on infrastructure and on housing numbers which did not appear to be based on need but on overall number requirements. There was concern among residents in the ward about housing around Barnton/Anderton. There would also be a need for the Local Plan to factor in recent appeal decisions including the Winnington Lime Bed Solar Farm. The Chairman queried how devolution would interact with the Local Plan? Councillor Marshall responded that any devolved administration/Mayor would need to follow the Local Plan provisions.

- Devolution – CWAC would vote on the devolution proposals at the council meeting on 9 September; there would need to be a vote in favour of devolution by all three Cheshire councils – CWAC, Cheshire East and Warrington. This would then establish a Combined Authority with Directors appointed to run the authority and an elected Mayor in 2027.
- Winnington Lime Bed Solar Farm – the application had been granted following a planning appeal held on 1 July. The Marbury Councillors had put in a lot of work to prepare for their attendance to make formal representations about their objections; there had also been a number of residents in attendance who had also raised concerns. Councillor Marshall felt there had been strong arguments made against the development. It was felt that the decision did not take into account the impact on local roads and infrastructure with only mention of Winnington Avenue in the Inspector's Report. There was a campaign underway for Judicial Review. The Chairman had received some informal planning advice which she would share with the CWAC Ward Councillors.

- Witton Street pedestrian area – the Ward Councillors had organised an online and paper petition urging CWAC to take action to repair and make safe the hazardous and inaccessible sections of Witton Street and High Street in Northwich town centre, including broken paving, uneven surfaces, damaged drains, and hazardous steps.
- The Chairman referred to the project to replace the infant slide unit and whether any funding might be available from the Ward Councillors' budget; Councillor Marshall encouraged the council to submit an application.

6. Recreation Area and Pump Track

6.1 The new inspection rota would be circulated to councillors before the next meeting. There were three inspection reports to consider. It was noted that some of the wet pour surfacing was shrinking and a bench seat needed repair. It was also noted that the area had looked untidy with overhanging trees, debris and some litter. It was agreed to seek advice on cutting back tree growth to reduce leaf debris and improve the light and view; purchase more wet pour and repair the seat. A reminder about not leaving litter would be included in the Chairman's update for the next newsletter.

6.2 The Clerk had contacted the manufacturer about the issue raised by the Rospa inspector about the distance of the basket seat to the stanchion. A response was awaited and a reminder would be sent again.

6.3 The Clerk referred to an issue raised with her about the gate into the Recreation Area opening outwards which the member of the public felt was not appropriate; Members advised that this was to stop any dogs or foxes being able to push open the gate to get in and then be unable to get out. It was also usual for a gate to be pushed open to enable exit in an emergency situation. The Clerk would respond to the member of the public.

6.4 The project to replace the infant multi-play unit was now live on the Spacehive platform. The Clerk would seek support from the Ward Councillors as outlined above and the Fete Committee. A flyer had been produced with details and had been shared with the WI and Ladies Club; Councillors would share with their neighbours. A number of residents had contacted the parish council to pledge support and the Clerk would send the flyer to them all to advise that donations could now be made. It was noted that early donations were encouraged to gain momentum and show support for the project. Members discussed other possible sources of funding including Cussons PZ and the Co-op. The Clerk would investigate. There was also the option to apply to the Manchester Airport Community Trust Fund but Members agreed to consider this option for a future project. The RFO updated that the overall project cost was £22,280 with £250 pledged to date via the portal. The council budget had an allocation of £10k and it was likely the maximum amount that could be awarded via Spacehive would be £10k.

6.5 The Rospa inspection in April had recommended a pigeon deterrent be fitted to the top of the swing unit. Examples were shown at the meeting. It was agreed to explore the costs and bring this to the next meeting.

(25/46) RESOLVED: that:

(a) The issues raised through the inspection reports be progressed through the purchase of wet pour granules and the seat be repaired; and the Clerk would seek advice and indicative costs for tree works around the Recreation Area. The table tennis table would be added to the checklist.

(b) Massey and Harris be reminded 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.

(c) The Clerk will respond to the member of the public about the gate opening issue.

(d) The Clerk would seek support from the Ward Councillors and the Fete Committee for the infant multi-unit replacement project and explore sources of funding from Cussons PZ and the Co-op. The Clerk would contact all those who had been in touch with the parish council to pledge money. All councillors were encouraged to promote the project.

(e) The costs and options for the pigeon deterrent be considered at the next meeting.

7. Highways and Streetscene

7.1 The latest SID data had been shared. The SID had been placed on Gibb Hill for the latter part of July and there had been a number of occasions when vehicles had been significantly above the speed limit. Members agreed it would be useful to gather further data on the speeds on Gibb Hill including a request to CWAC Highways to undertake speed monitoring.

7.2 Members discussed an issue with high walls replacing lower walls or hedges on the perimeter of residential properties; this could impact highway visibility as well as giving a closed in feel in the environment. The Clerk would raise this with planning and highways to find out the legislation and requirements.

(25/47) RESOLVED: that

(a) The Clerk will request CWAC Highways to install a speed monitoring device on Gibb Hill.

(b) The Clerk will contact CWAC Highways and Planning to seek information on the rules around erecting high walls at the boundary of properties.

8. Accounts and financial matters

8.1 The RFO reported that he had now set up a current account with Unity Bank which would give access to savings accounts. The charge for a current account was £6 per month. The bank would be required to notify the parish council should this charge be changed. The RFO outlined various savings options. He felt £30k could be put into two or more savings accounts and reported that there were accounts with 6- and 12-month fixed notice periods which had the best interest rates, as well as other accounts for a shorter fixed period with a lower interest rate. He proposed retaining £7k in an instant access account. Members supported putting £15k each in a 6- and 12-month fixed notice account. It was noted that should earlier access be required then any interest would not be applied.

8.2 The accounts for 30 July 2025 were listed in Appendix 1

8.3 The list of payments was in Appendix 2

(25/48) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The RFO be authorised to open savings accounts with Unity Trust Bank, including one account for a 12-month fixed term with a current rate of interest of 4% and one account for a 6-month fixed term also at a 4% interest rate.
- (b) The Direct Debit charge for the Unity Trust account, which is currently £6 per month, be approved and it is noted that this is variable.
- (c) The accounts in Appendix 1 with a balance of £24,138.49 and £36,916.95 in reserves be noted.
- (d) The list of payments in Appendix 2 be approved.

9. Issues and Projects

9.1 The Christmas concert had been booked for Saturday 13 December. The Chairman had referenced the event in her update for the Comberbach Village Newsletter. It was agreed to promote the event earlier to encourage attendance.

9.2 Councillor McDermott reported that a number of residents had raised concerns with her about noise from barking dogs. It was noted that there was a regulated business offering dog boarding in the village. If residents were particularly concerned about noise levels they could report this to CWAC. It was noted that the parish council did not have any authority in this matter but the Chairman would include reference to being a good neighbour in a future CVN.

9.3 The Clerk had shared information from a resident who was concerned about some empty properties that were detrimental to the visual appearance of the village. Members discussed whether there were any environmental health issues arising from empty properties but the council was limited in what action could be taken. It was felt that promoting pride in the village through the CVN would be a positive approach.

9.4 Councillor McDermott updated on research into installing a pickleball court in the Memorial Hall. The game was played indoors using a lightweight ball. She had sought a quote for line painting in the hall which suggested the cost would be £800 - £1k with nets priced at around £150 - £200. It was agreed to find out what demand there would be in the village for such a facility. It was noted that the CMH would receive income from court hire and they could be asked if they would fund the costs of line painting and equipment but with the option to apply for a grant towards some of the cost from the parish council. Councillor McDermott would attend the next CMH Committee meeting and seek views; it could also be promoted on social media to find out whether there was any interest.

9.5 Members discussed a possible 'Men in Sheds' project. This had been included in the CVN and on social media but there did not appear to be any interest. It was agreed not to pursue this at the moment.

(25/49) RESOLVED: that

(a) The arrangements for the Christmas concert be noted and finalised at the next meeting.

(b) No action be taken by the parish council regarding complaints about noisy dogs and empty/untidy properties as these matters are outside the powers of the council. However, the Chairman's update for the next CVN will include reference to being a good neighbour to address the matters raised at the meeting around noisy dogs, litter and keeping your property tidy.

(c) The option of a pickleball facility be considered further at the next meeting when feedback has been sought from the Memorial Hall Committee and residents.

(d) No action be taken about a possible Men in Sheds project at the moment.

10. Planning

10.1 Members noted the decision following a planning appeal, to grant planning permission on land at Winnington Avenue, Northwich, for the re-engineering, remediation (through the creation of a development platform), restoration, and subsequent installation of a commercial scale photovoltaic solar park including a battery energy storage system (BESS) and other associated development at Land at Winnington Avenue, Northwich, CW8 4EE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 23/02766/FUL, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions in the schedule.

10.2 Planning decisions were listed in Appendix 3.

10.3 There were no enforcement matters.

(25/50) RESOLVED: that the planning update be noted.

11. Correspondence

The list of correspondence had been circulated.

(25/51) RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.

12. Representative Reports

- Comberbach Memorial Hall Management Committee – no further update other than items raised during the meeting.
- Police Liaison – the updates from the PCSO had been circulated and showed no issues in Comberbach.
- Comberbach Fete – nothing to update at the moment.
- School Liaison – Councillor McDermott had been in touch with the Head Teacher who had raised no issues.
- Bowling Club – Councillor Darwin agreed to notify the Club of the Christmas Concert.

13. Exclusion of Public and Press – Part 2

(25/52) 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.

14. Parish council land ownership

The council possessed the deeds for the land in its ownership but agreed to progress the registration process.

(25/53) RESOLVED: that Councillor Holt will investigate the process to register the land in the ownership of the parish council.

The Meeting closed at 8.45pm.

The next meeting of Comberbach Parish Council will be on Tuesday 28 October 2025 at 6.30pm.

Signed
Chairman

Appendix 1 Accounts for 30 July 2025

Current account	£24,138.49	Reserve £36,916.95
Cash book	£61,797.65	Reconciliation: 0

Appendix 2 Payments

Item	Amount	Power
Shane Ross – Maintenance invoice 25.01	£650.00	LGA 1972 s 111
Transfer to new Unity Trust current a/c	£50.00	LGA 1972 s 111

Pre-Authorised Payments

Item	Amount	Power
PAP2507 – Synchroprint, CVN July 25	£232.32	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2508 – PKF Littlejohn, Ext Audit fee 2025	£252.00	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license July 25	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, July 25	£7.95	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	Fri 30 Apr 2021	Awaiting decision

conditions 2 (approved plans) and 3 (materials) of planning permission 19/01832/FUL), 31 Senna Lane		
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	Approved
25/02057/S73 - Single storey rear extension - variation of condition 2 (plans) and condition 3 (materials) of planning application, The Croft, The Avenue	4 August 2025	Awaiting decision