

Minutes of the Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council held on Tuesday 28 October 2025

Present

Councillors:

Jill Johnston (Chairman in the Chair)

Bill Briggs

Sandy Cameron

Richard Chandler

John Darwin

Val McDermott

John Ryder

Denise French (Clerk)

Stephen Penwill (RFO)

Also present:

CWAC Councillor Lynn Gibbon

The Meeting started at 6.30pm.

Public Open Forum

There were no members of the public present.

1. Apologies for Absence

CWAC Councillor Marshall had submitted apologies.

2. Bob Holt

The Chairman reported that Bob Holt had notified her of his resignation from the Parish Council with immediate effect. She would write to him to thank him for his service to the Parish Council and village. The Clerk would notify CWAC of the vacancy.

3. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 2 September 2025

(25/54) RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 2 September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

5. Progress Reports and Updates

5.1 Resilience Plan – the Joint Cheshire Emergency Planning Team had commented on the Parish Council's draft Resilience Plan and the amended version had been circulated. The Clerk agreed to divide up the draft Plan so each councillor would have a section of the Plan to contact the people and organisations to make sure they were willing to be included with their contact details. The Clerk would confirm whether the plan was a public document. Members would consider the plan further at the next meeting. The Clerk had completed a questionnaire that was part of a pilot project to assess the resilience of the organisation along with providing feedback on improvements and procedures to enable support to local residents before, during and after an emergency event. It was agreed to consider the Resilience Plan further at the next meeting.

5.2 Councillor McDermott updated on the ongoing discussion about the possibility of a pickleball court at the Memorial Hall. She was aware of some interest among villagers and the Chairman had included reference in her update in the Village Newsletter that was due for publication in November, asking anyone who was interested in a pickleball facility in Comberbach to contact Councillor McDermott. The Memorial Hall was happy to include line markings for a court in the main hall and to store equipment. This would be considered further at the next meeting.

6. Cheshire West and Chester Councillors update

CWAC Councillor Gibbon said she would send the written Marbury Ward update to the Clerk for circulation. She updated on the following matters:

- The petition initiated by the Ward Councillors in response to concerns about the pedestrian area surface in Northwich town centre and the number of trips and falls was to be considered by the Places Scrutiny Committee for infrastructure issues and the People Scrutiny Committee in relation to the numbers of people affected by trips and falls.
- She had submitted a Notice of Motion to the Council regarding Electric Vehicles and SUVs in Multi-Storey Car Parks and the Council had decided to refer the matter to a Task and Finish Group for a review including fire safety and car park structures.
- The recent granting of planning permission on appeal for the solar farm included 41 recommendations and the focus would now be on ensuring they were implemented. A local group had been established called Toxic Free Tomorrow and was working with local councillors.
- The Conservative group had chosen a candidate for the role of Mayor of Cheshire and Warrington which would go to election in 2027.
- In response to residents' queries she had confirmed with the farmer who ran the Milk House that it would be re-opening in a few weeks.
- She had attended the recent meeting hosted by the Police and Crime Commissioner where he had outlined a campaign to stop use of mobile phones in schools during the school day.
- A new mobile mast was to be installed in Anderton on land owned by the Parish Council.

Members referred to recent notifications about road closures which were due to commence on 27 October but to date, no work had taken place. There was also reference to a flood test exercise in Northwich for which advance notice had not been given to local businesses and feedback was still awaited.

7. Recreation Area and Pump Track

7.1 The Council considered the report from the recent inspection by Northwich Town Council. One issue raised was about the zip wire and members of the public had also reported that the zip wire did not appear to be working smoothly. Councillor Chandler had investigated and explained that it worked well when used as intended - ie the user stood on the platform and pulled the seat towards them at an angle; if it was pulled vertically from the ground it did not run smoothly. The boards on the platform had been repaired and the loose screw would be tightened.

7.2 Following the previous meeting, the Clerk had reminded the manufacturer about the need to address the issue at the swing set that had been raised by Rospa about the distance between the basket swing and the supporting post. The manufacturer had indicated they would visit now the summer holidays were over but to date had not resolved the issue. The Clerk would send a further reminder.

7.3 The Council considered the recommendation of the Finance Committee regarding future Rospa inspections:

“RESOLVED: that the council continues to use Playsafety for the annual Rospa Inspection but the Clerk will request a different inspector.”

Members supported this recommendation.

7.4 Members discussed the Crowdfunding project to replace the infant multi-unit. There had been 49 backers to date, the Fete Committee had agreed a donation of £250 and the Ward Councillors had donated £200 each. The next stage was to await the outcome of the CWAC Assessment Panel. The Clerk had contacted PZ Cussons to see if there was an opportunity to apply for grant funding but they had responded that they were unable to support any new applicants. She had also investigated funding via the Co-op but their current funding was now finished but there would be a new round in spring 2026.

7.5 The Rospa Inspector had recommended installing spikes on the top of the swing set to act as a pigeon deterrent. Members agreed to wait for the issue outlined above with the support bar to be resolved by the manufacturer.

7.6 Following issues raised about the zip wire as outlined above, a quote had been received to strip the zip line and fit a new tyre and carousel. As outlined in 7.1 above, the issues with the zip wire had been addressed and Members agreed that further work was not necessary at this stage.

7.7 The Council considered a quote to undertake various tree works at the Recreation Area. A site visit had taken place to explore cutting back the overhanging trees and a quote was received for this work and the tree surgeon had also recommended work be carried out on some trees located on the car park. Members agreed to seek further quotes for the work to ensure best value and consider the quotes at the next meeting.

7.8 The Council considered whether to seek a quote for jet washing and cleaning the wet pour surface at the Recreation Area. It was agreed to ask Shane Ross who undertook general grounds maintenance if this was something he could undertake and if not, seek alternative quotes.

(25/55) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The inspection report be noted.
- (b) Massey and Harris be reminded again about the issue raised by the Rospa Inspector regarding the distance of the basket swing to the stanchion and that Members support the suggestion to replace the beam.
- (c) The Clerk would contact Playsafety regarding the annual Rospa Inspection and request an alternate inspector who is not familiar with the Recreation Area and facilities.
- (d) The update on the Crowdfunding campaign be noted.
- (e) The installation of spikes to deter pigeons be deferred.
- (f) The quote from Northwich Town Council for a repair to the zip wire is not accepted as the Parish Council does not think any repair is necessary at the moment.
- (g) Two further quotes be sought for the tree works at the Recreation Area and all quotes be considered at the next meeting.
- (h) Shane Ross be approached to ascertain if he can jet wash the wet pour surface at the Recreation Area but if he is not able to, the Clerk contact an alternate company.

8. Highways and Streetscene

8.1 The SID data would be considered at the next meeting. The SID would be located on Cogshall Lane for the forthcoming month.

8.2 The Clerk had contacted CWAC Highways to request they undertake further speed monitoring on Gibb Hill but they had advised they no longer carried out traffic surveys in house and funding would need to be provided by the Parish Council or via the CWAC Members. Members had noted a black box speed device on the A49.

(25/56) RESOLVED: that

- (a) The SID data be considered at the next meeting.
- (b) The funding of a speed monitoring device on Gibb Hill be considered at the next meeting.

9. Accounts and financial matters

9.1 The minutes of the Finance Committee held on 8 October 2025 were noted.

9.2 The Council considered the report of the RFO on savings products and the recommendation of the Finance Committee as set out below:

“RESOLVED: that the Parish Council be recommended to open notice savings accounts with Charity Bank.”

The RFO explained that he had set up an account with Unity Trust but the minimum deposit for a high value savings account was now £85k. Finance Committee had recommended that £30k be moved to Charity Bank to take advantage of higher interest rates with £15,000 deposited in a one year fixed savings account, and £15,000 in a 100 day notice account. Members supported this action.

9.3 The Council considered the provision of internal audit and payroll services. Finance Committee recommended remaining with the current internal auditor JDH Business Services and that quotes be sought for alternative payroll providers. The Council supported this and the RFO would seek quotes for consideration at the next meeting.

9.4 The accounts for 30 September 2025 were listed in Appendix 1

9.5 The list of payments was in Appendix 2

(25/57) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The minutes of the meeting of Finance Committee held on 7 October be noted.
- (b) The RFO be authorised to open notice savings accounts with Charity Bank as outlined at the meeting.
- (c) The Council will continue to use JDH Business Services for internal audit.
- (d) The RFO be requested to seek quotes for the provision of payroll services and they be considered at the next meeting.
- (e) The accounts in Appendix 1 with a balance of £21,627.89 and £36,916.95 in reserves be noted.
- (d) The list of payments in Appendix 2 be approved.

10. Issues and Projects

10.1 The Christmas concert had been booked for Saturday 13 December. The Chairman and Councillor McDermott would organise refreshments. Councillor Cameron would arrange for a poster to be produced for noticeboards and the website.

10.2 Members discussed street furniture, both current and whether the Parish Council wished to invest in additional items such as floral displays. Members felt there were various items in the village that would benefit from cleaning, repairing or repainting but that the War Memorial should be a priority for cleaning and tidying. Members also noted the surface of the car park needed attention. It was agreed to prioritise the War Memorial and defer consideration of other items to the next meeting.

10.3 The Clerk advised that a resident had contacted her to express interest in a Men in Sheds project. This was the only interest that Members had received after some months of advertising this as a potential provision. It was agreed to put the resident in touch with the Hartford Men in Sheds group.

(25/58) RESOLVED: that

(a) The arrangements for the Christmas concert be noted and a poster be displayed on noticeboards, the website and social media.

(b) Councillor Ryder will coordinate a group of councillors to improve the area around the War Memorial. The provision of new street furniture and floral displays and a programme of cleaning and maintenance for existing assets be deferred to the next meeting. The car park surface also be considered at the next meeting.

(c) The resident be given the contact details for the Hartford Men in Sheds project.

11. Planning

11.1 The Clerk had received advice from CWAC Planning about high boundary treatments on residential properties. This advised that a person could erect a fence, wall or other means of enclosure up to 2m in height without requiring planning permission, unless it was adjacent to a highway in which case it could only be 1m in height. This information was noted.

11.2 Planning decisions were listed in Appendix 3.

11.3 There were no enforcement matters.

11.4 Keuper Gas Storage Project was currently consulting on a material change to their proposals as follows:

- the storage of hydrogen gas rather than natural gas including consolidation of pipelines;
- changes to the Gas Processing Plant (GPP) area and hydrogen compatible equipment, including a 50m flare instead of a vent;
- moving non-hydrogen equipment to a utility compound adjacent to the GPP; and
- the National Transmission System (NTS) connection for natural gas is being replaced by the Hydrogen Above Ground Infrastructure (HAGI) for connection to the HyNet Hydrogen Pipeline.

Members agreed not to comment.

11.5 The Clerk had contacted Chambers Fletcher Solicitors about the costs of registering land owned by the Parish Council and the solicitors had advised the cost would be approximately £850 + VAT plus disbursements. Members agreed to progress using the solicitors to register its land.

(25/59) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) the information from CWAC about boundary treatments be noted and deferred to the next meeting.
- (b) the planning update be noted.
- (c) No comments be made on the consultation about the material change to the Keuper Gas Storage Project.
- (d) The Clerk contact Chambers Fletcher Solicitors to confirm the Council wishes them to progress registering the land in the ownership of the Parish Council.

12. Correspondence

The list of correspondence had been circulated. Steve Howard would be asked if he would like the plaque that had been discovered in a resident's house as part of the village history.

(25/60) RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.

13. 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. Councillor Chandler had attended the Police and Crime Commissioner's liaison meeting which had included information about the SWAP fund for which the current

round of funding had now closed. There may be future opportunities for funding.

- Comberbach Fete – nothing to update at the moment.
- School Liaison – Councillor McDermott was a regular visitor at the school and had good communication with the Head Teacher.
- Bowling Club – Councillor Darwin agreed to notify the Club of the Christmas Concert.

14. Exclusion of Public and Press – Part 2

None

The Meeting closed at 8.50pm.

The next meeting of Comberbach Parish Council will be on Tuesday 2 December 2025 at 6.30pm.

Signed
Chairman

Appendix 1 Accounts for 30 July 2025

	Current a/c	Savings a/c	Total
Santander	£21,577.89	£21,916.95	£43,494.84
Unity Trust	£50.00	£15,000.00	£15,050.00
Total	£21,627.89	£36,916.95	£58,544.84

Appendix 2 Payments

Item	Amount	Power
Shane Ross – Maintenance invoice 25.02	£650.00	LGA 1972 s 111
Parish Council Websites – website costs 25/26 inv 3855	£273.60	LGA 1972 s 111
J Ryder – Materials & spare keys	£63.36	LGA 1972 s 111

Pre-Authorised Payments

Item	Amount	Power
PAP2509 – NBB Outdoors, replacement table tops	£215.94	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2510 – NTC, Qtyly Inspection July, inv 8667	£72.00	LGA 1972 s 111

PAP2511 – Synchroprint, Sept CVN	£232.00	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2512 – HMRC, PAYE Q2	£338.00	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license Aug 25	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license Sep 25	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Aug 25	£7.95	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Sep 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 conditions 2 (approved plans) and 3 (materials) of planning permission 19/01832/FUL), 31 Senna Lane	Fri 30 Apr 2021	Awaiting decision
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
25/02057/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
25/02716/TPO - 6 Kennelwood Road		Awaiting decision
25/02493/FUL - 25/02493/FUL – single storey extension, 15 Goosebrook Close		Awaiting decision
25/02880/PAA – addition of first floor storey, 17 Senna Lane		Awaiting decision
25/03141/TPO – Avenue Farm, The Avenue		Awaiting decision

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