

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council held on Tuesday 19 May 2026

Present

Councillors:

Jill Johnston (Chairman in the Chair)

Bill Briggs

Sandy Cameron

Richard Chandler

Val McDermott

John Ryder

Denise French (Clerk)

CWAC Councillor Lynn Gibbon (from 7.00pm)

The Meeting started at 6.30pm.

Public Open Forum

There were no members of the public present.

1. Appointment of Chairman 2026-7

(26/26) RESOLVED: That Councillor Jill Johnston be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Councillors John Darwin (family reasons) and Jenny Washburn (family reasons) and the RFO, Stephen Penwill (family reasons).

3. Appointment of Vice Chairman 2026-7

(26/27) RESOLVED: that Councillor Sandy Cameron be appointed Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.

4. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

5. Minutes of the Meetings of the Parish Council held on 10 March 2026

(26/28) RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Meetings of the Parish Council held on 10 March 2026 be approved as a correct record.

6. Progress Reports and Updates

6.1 Resilience Plan – the Clerk updated that the Parish Council's draft Resilience Plan had been submitted to the Joint Emergency Planning team who had suggested including named roads subject to flooding; Members agreed to reference Cogshall Lane, Warrington Road and Budworth Lane. There were also some contact details to be added. A wind up radio and torches had been purchased and stored in the storage unit. Members agreed to approve the plan once updated and submit it to the Joint Emergency Planning Team.

6.2 Fingerpost signs – CWAC Highways had asked that any signs pointing incorrectly should be reported for the Network Steward to review. Councillor Chandler agreed to review signs and whether they could be manually corrected. If not, he would report them.

(26/29) RESOLVED: that the Clerk will amend the Resilience Plan as discussed and submit it to the Joint Emergency Planning Team as the final version.

7. Recreation Area and Pump Track

7.1 The Council considered the annual Rospa inspection which had included a post installation inspection of the new infant play unit. There were no significant issues. Councillor Ryder had undertaken some minor repairs that had been identified. The inspection report for May was also considered with no issues identified.

(26/30) RESOLVED: that the inspection reports be noted.

8. Highways and Streetscene

8.1 The Clerk had contacted CWAC Highways regarding lack of notification of temporary road closures and identifying a number of road closures as examples. The response stated that the Cogshall Lane closure had been cancelled and that the Marbury Road closure related to Anderton not Comberbach. It was noted that there were a number of inaccuracies in the response from CWAC including Cogshall Lane which had been closed and Councillor Darwin had spoken to the contractors undertaking the work. Marbury Road in Comberbach had also been closed. It was also noted that Senna Lane was to be closed from 26 May and no prior notice had been received to date. The Clerk was asked to respond to CWAC Highways with the following points:

- correcting the list of inaccuracies
- emphasising the importance of prior notification to enable the council to share the information with residents as road closures are very impactful to Comberbach which is often used as a 'rat run' when there are problems on the motorway
- referencing the upcoming road closure of Senna Lane which has not been notified

- asking whether road closures in adjacent parishes could be notified to neighbouring councils if they will impact both
- referencing the road closure on Cogshall Lane on 6 May for pot hole repairs which had also been closed a few weeks earlier for gully cleaning. It was noted that not all gullies had been cleared which meant a third visit would be required for one stretch of road – could a more coordinated approach be introduced which would be more efficient for CWAC and better for residents through reducing the time period and frequency of road closures.

8.2 The council considered the response from the Head of Highways to the issue raised about 3 gullies that had been cleaned in 2023 and seeking information on the cleaning schedule since then. The response had confirmed that drains on Cogshall Lane had been cleared on 14 and 15 April. Members agreed that the response had not answered the issues raised and it was also noted that some drains were too blocked to clear and this appeared to be a regular issue with the website showing annual figures that 42k drains had been attended but only 37k cleared. Members asked the Clerk to respond to the Head of Highways and that the council is considering raising the issues with the MP.

8.3 The Clerk had asked CWAC whether they would allow a grit bin to be located on Cogshall Lane if it was fully funded by the parish council. CWAC Highways had advised that Cogshall Lane was part of the secondary gritting routes and was treated during cold spells and a grit bin would not be supported at that location even if funded by the parish council. It was agreed not to progress this further.

8.4 The council considered the speed data from the speed surveys carried out on Marbury Road by the junction with The Moss and on The Avenue/Gibb Hill. It was noted that the data showed a similar picture to that from the council's own Speed Indicator Device (SID). There were a number of issues highlighted including 3k cars during the period that were travelling at over 40mph where the speed limit was 30mph. The issues tended to occur during commuting and school times. Members agreed to write to the Assistant Chief Constable urging enforcement using the data as evidence of speeding. Members discussed whether speed limits painted on the tarmac were effective in reinforcing limits. The Clerk would raise this query with CWAC.

8.5 The latest SID data would be submitted to the next meeting. The Clerk advised that the resident who had requested the SID be installed on Cogshall Lane had been in touch to say they had noticed a significant change in the way cars pass their property (in both directions) since the SID was installed and it had been very beneficial. The Clerk also updated that two volunteers had offered help with a community speedwatch scheme, the scheme was run by the Police and a minimum of three volunteers would be needed to enable the scheme to be set up. The Clerk

would contact the two interested persons to ascertain whether they could find any additional support and a reminder would be included in the next newsletter.

8.6 An issue was raised about tarmac restoration after roadworks and this would be discussed at the next meeting.

(26/31) RESOLVED: that

- (a) the Clerk will respond to CWAC Highways with the points about notification of temporary traffic orders as made above.
- (b) The Clerk will respond to the Head of Highways about gully clearing as outlined at the meeting.
- (c) No further action be taken on provision of grit bins.
- (d) The data on speeding be raised with the Assistant Chief Constable to urge speed monitoring be undertaken.
- (e) The query about painting speed limits on the tarmac be raised with CWAC.
- (f) The Clerk will contact the two residents about a speedwatch scheme and a further reminder will be included in the next newsletter.
- (g) The issue of restoring tarmac after roadworks be included on the next agenda.

9. Cheshire West and Chester Councillors update

The May update from the Marbury Ward Councillors had been circulated. CWAC Councillor Gibbon updated on the following points:

A special meeting of CWAC had taken place regarding the Peak Cluster proposals and a formal letter of objection to the proposals had been approved.

The Winnington Solar Farm was subject to 41 conditions prior to commencement and some had now been submitted to CWAC for approval.

There was now an interim Board in place for the Cheshire and Warrington Authority comprising the leaders of the three authorities. There was representation from opposition groups on the Scrutiny and Audit & Governance committees. The Scrutiny Committee would scrutinise the £10m budget which had been allocated to the interim Board.

The notes from the Locality Meeting held in October had now been received. Councillor Johnston said she felt they were lacking in detail with no commitment towards any actions.

The refurbishment of Northgate Arena was complete and there were 3k members; she had asked for a breakdown of membership types – ie full membership and concessionary.

A report on Northwich town centre had been received and there were several priorities identified. The new location for the market was due to open in summer and the library renovation works were due for completion in 2027.

The council was currently receiving a high number of retrospective planning applications.

There was a live consultation on the Weaver Square proposals which included 200+ residential dwellings along with retail; the housing would be a mix of social housing and private ownership. She had responded to the consultation to suggest leisure provision be included in the design.

10. Accounts and financial matters

10.1 The council noted the minutes of Finance Committee held on 21 April 2026.

10.2 The council received the Quarter 4 budget review and commentary from the RFO. It was noted that the increase in the insurance premium was not as high as expected.

10.3 Members considered the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) including:

- (a) the Internal Auditor's Report
- (b) the Annual Governance Statement
- (c) the Accounting Statements
- (d) the publication period.

The Internal Auditor had made one recommendation that the council adopt an IT policy and a draft policy was on the agenda for consideration.

10.4 The insurance cover for the year was £872.87 which took into account the asset register and replacement values.

10.5 The list of committee membership and appointments was considered. Members noted that in relation to planning, CWAC would be issuing a report following consultation last year on sites put forward for consideration to meet increased housing numbers.

10.6 The council approved the appointment of JDH Business Services for Internal Audit and DM Payroll Services for payroll.

10.7 The accounts for 30 April 2026 were listed in Appendix 1.

10.8 The list of payments was in Appendix 2. The council approved subscriptions to Chalc and the Mid-Cheshire Footpath Society.

10.9 The council considered the draft IT policy. The Clerk explained that it incorporated comments from Chalc. The policy was approved.

10.10 The council reviewed the Data Protection Policy which was approved without amendment.

10.11 The council approved the transfer of £100 from Santander current account to Unity Trust current account to cover future charges.

(26/32) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The minutes of Finance Committee held on 21 April be noted.
- (b) The Quarter 4 budget be received.
- (c) The Annual Governance Statement be approved.
- (d) The Accounting Statements be approved.
- (e) The dates for the period of the exercise of public rights from 3 June – 14 July be noted.
- (f) The insurance premium for the current year be noted.
- (g) The Terms of Reference for Finance Committee were approved.
- (i) The membership of Finance Committee be confirmed as Councillors Briggs, Cameron, Johnston, McDermott and Ryder.
- (j) The Terms of Reference for Staffing Committee be approved.
- (k) The membership of Staffing Committee be confirmed as Councillors Cameron, Johnston (Chairman) and Washburn (subject to Councillor Washburn agreeing to her appointment) otherwise Councillor Ryder be appointed.
- (l) The arrangements for dealing with Planning applications be confirmed:

The current arrangements are that the Clerk has delegated power to respond to planning applications by taking soundings from members of the 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 by the Parish Committee.

(m) The membership of Planning Committee be confirmed as Councillors Briggs, Chandler, Darwin and Ryder

(l) The following representatives be appointed:

- Comberbach Memorial Hall Management Committee – no representative needed.
- Fete Committee – Councillor Ryder

- Bowling Club – Councillor Darwin
- Police Liaison – Councillor Chandler
- School Liaison – Councillor McDermott up to summer 2026 and a new representative be appointed from August 2026.

(m) The appointment of JDH Business Services for internal audit and DM Payroll Service for payroll services be approved, up to the end of May 2027.

(n) The accounts in Appendix 1 with a balance of £86,813.04 including £37,000 in reserves be noted.

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

(p) The draft IT Policy as submitted be approved.

(q) The Data Protection Policy be approved without amendment.

(r) The transfer of £100 from Santander Current Account to Unity Trust Account to cover future charges be approved.

11. Issues and Projects

11.1 Members considered the provision of an additional Christmas tree in the village. Councillor Washburn had undertaken research looking at provision in other villages. The possibility of a tree including lights on land at the junction between Marbury Road and Budworth Lane was considered too expensive but it was felt options to work with The Spinner pub could be further explored. The issue would be considered further at the next meeting.

(26/33) RESOLVED: that consideration of an additional Christmas tree in the village be deferred to the next meeting.

12. Planning

12.1 Planning decisions were listed in Appendix 3.

12.2 There were no enforcement matters.

(26/34) RESOLVED: that

- (a) the planning update be noted.
- (b) The Clerk write to the Planning Department regarding the planning session held in February and the lack of notes from the session.

13. Correspondence

The list of correspondence had been circulated.

(26/35) RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.

14. Representative Reports

- Comberbach Memorial Hall Management Committee – no updates.
- Police Liaison – no additional update.
- School Liaison – no update.
- Fete Committee – no update.
- Bowling Club – no update.

15. Exclusion of Public and Press – Part 2

(26/36) 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 items of business due to the confidential nature of the matters to be discussed.

16. Comberbach Achievement Award

The Council considered the recipient of the annual Parish Council Award.

(26/37) RESOLVED: That the recipient of the Award be approved as discussed at the meeting.

17. Registering land in the ownership of the parish council

Members considered a quote from a surveyor to undertake a land valuation; it was higher than the cost of the registration fee. It was agreed that the value of the land should be confirmed as within the banding of £100,000 and £200,000. This would be checked with the council solicitors.

(26/38) RESOLVED: that the land value be confirmed to the solicitors as within the banding £100,000 and £200,000.

18. Responsible Financial Officer

The council noted that the RFO had submitted his formal notice. Members considered the report of the Clerk on the role of the RFO, including the job description, which was from 2017, along with the additional tasks that were undertaken. The hours and job description would be reviewed with the RFO and the role would be advertised with Chalc and on the website, noticeboard and social media.

(26/39) RESOLVED: that the job description be approved subject to the additional elements as identified in the report and the Clerk be granted delegated power to confirm the final job description and hours in consultation with Staffing Committee to enable the post to be advertised.

The Meeting closed at 9.20pm.

The next meeting of Comberbach Parish Council will be held on 14 July 2026 at 6.30pm.

Signed
Chairman

Appendix 1 Accounts for 30 April 2026

	Current a/c	Savings a/c	Total
Santander	£49,422.45	£22,219.84	£71,642.29
Unity Trust	£7.40	£15,163.35	£15,170.75
Total	£49,429.85	£37,383.19	£86,813.04

Appendix 2 Payments

Item	Amount	Power
Cllr Cameron - Emergency torches	£31.97	LGA 1972 s 111
Cllr Cameron - Emergency radios	£29.99	LGA 1972 s 111
Shane Ross - Inv 25.04, 3 rd payment for 25/26 mtce	£650.00	LGA 1972 s 111
Zurich Municipal - Insurance 26/27	£872.87	LGA 1972 s 111
CHALC - subscription 26/27	£304.40	LGA 1972 s 111
JDH Business Services - Int Audit 25/26 Y/E	£380.40	LGA 1972 s 111
RoSPA Playsafety - Annual & Post installation insp	£504.00	LGA 1972 s 111
Mid Chesh Footpath Society - subscription 26/27	£8.00	LGA 1972 s 111
Kompan - Inv 268719, Infant multi play unit	£25,149.58	LGA 1972 s 111
Synchroprint - Inv 8720, CVN May 26	£232.32	LGA 1972 s 111
D French - expenses to 10/5/26	£131.49	LGA 1972 s 111

Pre-Authorised Payments

Item	Amount	Power
PAP2520 - Synchroprint - Inv 8598, Mar CVN	£199.40	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2521 - OJT Tree Services - inv 3491	£3,000.00	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2522 - HMRC - PAYE Q4 25/26	£410.99	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2523 - Bounceback - Inv 0566, wetpour	£555.60	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license Mar 26	£23.50	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Mar 26	£7.95	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Unity Trust account fee Mar 26	£7.00	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Unity Trust account fee Apr 26	£7.00	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) of planning permission 19/01832/FUL), 31 Senna Lane	Fri 30 Apr 2021	Awaiting decision
25/01163/FUL - Demolition of existing dwelling, erection of new dwelling, 27 Senna Lane	20 May 2025	Approved
25/03364/FUL - Demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings, including removal of the mobile home, and the erection of a replacement dwelling -Brookside Farm		Awaiting decision

26/00058/TPO – various tree works, 1 Bracken Way		Approved
26/00124/TPO – tree works, 28 Mather Drive		Approved
26/00157/TPO – tree works, Mulberry House		Approved

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