

Minutes of the Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council held on Tuesday 14 July 2026

Present

Councillors:

Jill Johnston (Chairman in the Chair)

Bill Briggs

Sandy Cameron

Richard Chandler

John Darwin

John Ryder

Jenny Washburn

Denise French (Clerk)

Stephen Penwill (RFO)

CWAC Councillor Phil Marshall

The Meeting started at 6.30pm.

Public Open Forum

There were no members of the public present.

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received and approved from Councillor Val McDermott (family reasons).

2. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. Minutes of the meetings of the parish council held on 19 May and 15 June 2026

(26/41) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) the minutes of the meeting of the parish council held on 19 May 2026 be approved as a correct record; and
- (b) the minutes of the meeting of the parish council held on 15 June 2026 be approved as a correct record.

4. Cheshire West and Chester Councillors update

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

- Councillor Norman Wright would be standing down at the elections in 2027; Louise Morris had been selected to stand as Conservative candidate for Marbury Ward alongside him and Lynn Gibbon.

- The wider CWAC Conservative Group had worked together to devise 6 pledges for the 2027 elections and the focus included highways, high streets, support to local businesses and reviving towns and protecting villages.
- The Conservative Group were concerned that CWAC had decided to delay the production of a new Local Plan to enable the plan to move into the Government's new plan-making system. The Group were concerned that this would leave CWAC vulnerable with several speculative applications already submitted.
- The Environment Agency had rejected Green Earth Development's (GED) land contamination assessment proposals for the Wallerscote Lime Beds site on the grounds that they found the developer's plans for addressing the risks inadequate. This meant GED would need to submit improved strategies for handling contaminated land and waste.
- The Conservative Group continued to monitor planning enforcement and remained concerned by the lack of enforcement action. There were currently 40 live cases across the Marbury Ward.
- The Ward Councillors had funding available through their Members' budgets and applications were encouraged.
- The Fete Committee were congratulated on the success of the fete in June.

5. Progress Reports and Updates

5.1 Resilience Plan – the Clerk had updated the Parish Council's Resilience Plan and it had been submitted to the Joint Emergency Planning team. It was agreed to contact those in the plan to request they notify the Clerk should their contact details change. The Resilience Plan would be reviewed in a year.

5.2 Fingerpost signs – this was deferred to the next meeting.

(26/42) RESOLVED: that

(a) the Clerk will contact those named in the Resilience Plan to ask that they notify her if their contact details change.

(b) the Fingerpost signs be deferred to the next meeting.

6. Recreation Area and Pump Track

6.1 The Council considered the inspection report from July. The issues identified were to top up the gravel on the footpaths and repair some of the wet pour surfacing. The gate needed a new locking pin which Councillor Ryder would progress.

6.2 Members approved the purchase of 5 litres of super strength weedkiller at a cost of £50.

6.3 Members discussed cleaning the wet pour surfacing. A quote would be obtained for autumn after the surface repair.

(26/43) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) a quote for gravel be considered at the next meeting.
- (b) a quote for the wet pour repair be considered at the next meeting.
- (c) the gate locking pin be repaired.
- (d) the purchase of 5 litres of super strength weedkiller be approved.
- (e) a quote for wet pour surface cleaning be considered at the next meeting.

7. Highways and Streetscene

7.1 The Clerk had contacted CWAC Head of Highways seeking further answers to queries raised about 3 gullies that had been cleaned in 2023 and seeking information on the cleaning schedule since then. Members were disappointed at the length of time to receive a response and felt there were several issues still to be clarified including why the 3 gullies had not been cleared in 2024 and 2025, how many gullies were identified as not operational, the timescales for clearing those gullies not cleared on schedule and clarification of the comment that some had been missed due to winter operations. The Clerk would respond accordingly to the Head of Highways.

7.2 Members items:

- (a) restoring tarmac after roadworks – this was deferred to the next meeting.
- (b) overgrown bushes impacting footpaths – this had been raised by Councillor McDermott because overgrown bushes were impacting access to footpaths and could affect visibility on the highway. Members agreed to walk round their area and contact residents if necessary. A reminder would be included in the next newsletter update and on the community Facebook page.
- (c) grass cutting around street furniture – Councillor Ryder said it did not appear that CWAC were strimming round signs, benches etc. Members agreed to ask Shane Ross if he could add this to his maintenance role and supply a quote. Members would provide to the Clerk any areas to be included.
- (d) Weed spraying – Councillor Ryder noted that the maintenance programme was that weed spraying be carried out twice yearly in June and September but it appeared not to have been undertaken in June as weeds on the village highways showed no sign of degradation. This issue would be included in the response to the Head of Highways discussed above. Members also agreed to discuss at the September meeting the various CWAC highways and general maintenance schedules.

(e) Speed issues – it was noted that the police were now conducting speed checks on roads in the village and this was welcomed.

The latest SID data was considered from The Avenue. Councillor Chandler explained that the average speed was 32.4mph. The data also showed that 4 vehicles per day travelled at over 50mph with 4 vehicles travelling at over 70 mph during the month. The overall data picture showed no change from previous data. Members agreed to locate the SID in the same location in August.

The Clerk had contacted CWAC about the possibility of painting roundels on the tarmac on The Avenue and Marbury Road to visibly remind drivers of the speed limit. The response from CWAC Highways was that they did not support this suggestion. Highways had held discussions with the Road Safety Team who had examined speed data, and they suggested very limited issues with speed limit compliance in these locations. Members felt this was in conflict with the council's own SID data and that from the recent speed survey. The council's own data suggested a high proportion of drivers travelled above the speed limit. The Clerk would query the data and advise CWAC Highways that the parish council would like to progress with roundels and ask how this could be progressed.

The Clerk had contacted the residents who had expressed an interest in a Speedwatch Scheme to advise that a minimum of three volunteers was required and whether they could find any additional support. There had been no additional offers of help so far. Members agreed to wait for residents to get in touch before progressing this matter any further.

(f) A resident had been in touch regarding horse droppings and Members had also noted this issue on certain roads. It was agreed that this was outside the parish council's remit and there was no legislation requiring riders to clear up.

(26/44) RESOLVED: that

- (a) The Clerk will respond to the Head of Highways about gully clearing as outlined at the meeting.
- (b) The issue of restoring tarmac after roadworks be included on the next agenda.
- (c) Members would walk round their area and contact residents if any issues of overhanging branches were considered to cause an impact to road users or pedestrians. A reminder would be included in the next newsletter update and on the community Facebook page
- (d) The Clerk to contact Shane Ross regarding a quote for strimming around street furniture based on a list of areas provided by Members.

- (e) The Clerk will raise the issue of weed spraying and the schedule with the CWAC Head of Highways.
- (f) The Clerk will contact CWAC Highways in relation to progressing provision of roundels on the main access points into the village on The Avenue and Marbury Road.
- (g) The Clerk will respond to the resident regarding horse droppings.

8. Accounts and financial matters

8.1 The council noted the minutes of Finance Committee held on 7 July 2026. The committee had discussed the changes to the Project Forward Look and recommended deferring two large replacement projects (junior multi-play unit and zipwire) back by one year each to enable more time to rebuild reserves. This recommendation was approved by the parish council.

8.2 The council received the Quarter 1 budget review and commentary from the RFO.

8.3 The accounts for 30 June 2026 were listed in Appendix 1.

8.4 The list of payments was in Appendix 2.

8.5 Governance Documents

The Council considered:

- (a) The current Financial Regulations, there were no recommended changes to the current version which were based on the National Association of Local Councils' model document.
- (b) Internet Banking Policy – a change was recommended to reference the council's accounts with Unity Bank.
- (c) Standing Orders – there were no recommended changes to the current version which were based on the National Association of Local Councils' model document.
- (d) Internal Control Procedures – it was noted that the document included the provision for 5% of all transactions to be checked from start to finish; it was agreed to ask the new RFO to review the document.
- (e) Risk Assessment – it was agreed to approve the Risk Assessment subject to ensuring there was clear reference that the parish council did not run the Fete or Fun Run.

- (f) Complaints Policy – the Council considered the Complaints Policy which was approved without amendment.
- (g) Grant Policy - the Council considered the Grant Policy which was approved without amendment.
- (h) Publication Scheme - the Council considered the Publication Scheme which was approved without amendment.

(26/45) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The minutes of Finance Committee held on 7 July be noted.
- (b) The recommendation of Finance Committee to defer two projects – replacements for the junior multi-play unit and zipwire – by one year each, to build up reserves, be approved.
- (c) The Quarter 1 budget be received.
- (d) The accounts in Appendix 1 with a balance of £56,972.64 including £27,000 in reserves be noted.
- (e) The list of payments in Appendix 2 be approved.
- (f) The following governance documents be approved and adopted:
 - Financial Regulations approved as submitted and adopted.
 - Standing orders approved as submitted.
 - Risk Assessment – approved as submitted subject to clarity around the Fete and Fun Run not being the parish council's responsibility.
 - Complaints Policy - approved without amendment.
 - Grant Policy - approved without amendment.
 - Publication Scheme - approved without amendment.
- (g) The Internet banking Policy be deferred to the next meeting to enable amendments to reference the council's bank accounts with Unity Bank.
- (h) The Internal Controls Procedure be deferred to the next meeting to enable review by the new RFO.

9. Issues and Projects

9.1 Members considered the provision of an additional Christmas tree in the village along with support towards a Christmas celebration event. Councillor Washburn had undertaken research looking at provision of Christmas trees in other villages including the costs and opportunities for a tree to be located on private land. The parish council currently funded the tree at the Methodist Church. Members agreed not to progress the option of a tree on highways land at the junction between

Marbury Road and Budworth Lane on cost and safety grounds as the location was a busy junction.

The option to work with The Spinner pub on a Christmas event was considered. Councillor Washburn agreed to discuss this further with the pub and encourage them to submit a grant application to the parish council.

Councillor Washburn also raised consideration of a project to subsidise Christmas lunches for residents. This was deferred to the next meeting.

9.2 The council discussed reinforcing the line markings on the Blue Badge parking bays at the front of the Memorial Hall. Councillor Ryder could borrow a line marking machine and the council agreed to purchase paint and two Blue Badge signs; the Clerk would ask if the Memorial Hall Committee would make a contribution towards the cost.

9.3 The purchase of additional lamp post poppies was discussed and members agreed to check current supplies and consider this further at the next meeting including whether to apply for funding from CWAC Members.

9.4 Parish councillors had received representations about the poor condition of the land around the BT Exchange building on Senna Lane. The Clerk would contact the Facilities Management Supplier.

(26/46) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) the provision of a Christmas tree on land at the junction of Marbury Road and Budworth Lane is not progressed.
- (b) Parish council support towards Christmas lunches be considered at the next meeting.
- (c) A budget of £200 be approved for paint for line marking the Blue Badge bays at the car park and Blue Badge signage; the Clerk will ask the Memorial Hall Committee whether they wish to make a financial contribution.
- (d) The purchase of additional lamp post poppies be considered at the next meeting.
- (e) The Clerk contact Facilities Management about the poor state of the BT Exchange Building.

(Note: Councillor Chandler left the meeting at this point).

10. Planning

10.1 Planning decisions were listed in Appendix 3.

10.2 Members discussed the outline application for residential development on land adjacent to Shrubbery Cottage which had been 'called in' by the CWAC councillors

for consideration at a Planning Committee meeting. The parish council had submitted an objection to the application. Members agreed to seek the support of a planning expert to help with any further representations on the application.

10.3 There were no enforcement matters.

(26/34) RESOLVED: that

- (a) the planning update be noted.
- (b) The council will seek the support of a planning expert to help with any further representations on the application on land adjacent to Shrubbery Cottage.

11. Correspondence

The list of correspondence had been circulated.

The Clerk reported that a query had been raised by the pizza vendor who operated monthly from the car park with parish council permission and a licence from CWAC. The pizza vendor had noticed a one-off pop-up pizza event being advertised on social media from the car park. This event had not received parish council permission. Members noted that the pizza vendor was supplying a private function at the Memorial Hall but had additionally advertised their services to the general public on social media. The Clerk would request that the administrators of the village social media not advertise events on parish council land without first ascertaining whether permission had been granted.

(26/47) RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.

12. Representative Reports

- Comberbach Memorial Hall Management Committee – no updates.
- Police Liaison – Members had received the latest PCSO updates. The Clerk advised that the local PC and PCSO were unable to attend this or the September meeting but had offered to hold an ad hoc meeting with councillors. Members felt the previous PCSO's attendance at parish council meetings had been very useful and requested the Clerk contact the PC and PCSO to ascertain whether they could amend their shifts to attend a parish council meeting and meet all the councillors.
- School Liaison – no update.
- Fete Committee – the Fete had been successful although there had been some issues with the Sum Up machine which impacted income.
- Bowling Club – the club was running well and showing World Cup games which were very popular.

13. Exclusion of Public and Press – Part 2

(26/48) 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.

14. Responsible Financial Officer

Following a recruitment process, the Staffing Committee had made a recommendation on the appointment of a RFO.

(26/49) RESOLVED: that Nicola Clarke be offered the role of RFO on SCP11 with effect from 1 August 2026. Stephen Penwill will remain in post till the meeting of Finance Committee on 13 October to assist with a handover of the role.

15. Registering land in the ownership of the parish council

Councillor Cameron advised that this was currently with Chambers Fletcher to conclude the registration process following confirmation of the land value.

(26/50) RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

The Meeting closed at 9.12pm.

The next meeting of Comberbach Parish Council will be held on Tuesday 15 September 2026 at 6.30pm.

Signed
Chairman

Appendix 1 Accounts for 30 June 2026

	Current a/c	Savings a/c	Total
Santander	£29,422.33	£12,219.84	£41,642.17
Unity Trust	£93.40	£15,237.07	£15,330.47
Total	£29,515.73	£27,456.91	£56,972.64

Appendix 2 Payments

Item	Amount	Power
BWP Creative - Domain renewal, Inv 4638	£36.00	LGA 1972 s 111
HMRC - PAYE, Q1	£410.79	LGA 1972 s 111
Cllr Ryder - Maintenance items, Award engraving	£40.34	LGA 1972 s 111
BWP Creative - Email storage, Inv 4521	£18.00	LGA 1972 s 111

Pre-Authorised Payments

Item	Amount	Power
PAP2601 - DM Payroll Services, Inv 5245	£208.80	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2602 - Barnton Band deposit & final payment	£300.00	LGA 1972 s 111
PAP2603 - Acton Marquees, Inv 3026	£2,097.60	LGA 1972 s 111
DD - ICO Annual Fee	£47.00	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license Apr 26	£25.46	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Babble, MS Office license May 26	£25.46	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Apr 26	£8.42	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Tesco Mobile, May 26	£8.42	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Unity Trust account fee May 26	£7.00	LGA 1972 s 111
DD – Unity Trust account fee Jun 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))	Fri 30 Apr 2021	Awaiting decision

of planning permission 19/01832/FUL), 31 Senna Lane		
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	27 October 2025	Approved
26/01476/OUT – outline application for residential development for up to 9 units, land at Shrubbery Cottage, Cogshall Lane	28 May 2026	Awaiting decision
26/01134/FUL - Demolition of single garage and construction of single storey side extension, Woodcroft, Marbury Road	4 June 2026	Awaiting decision
26/01709/FUL - Replacement office and storage/workshop buildings, provision of additional parking area and removal of 1 no. existing polytunnel greenhouse, Evergreen, Cogshall Nursery, Hough Lane	5 June 2026	Awaiting decision