

Minutes of the Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council held on Tuesday 15 September 2026

Present

Councillors:

Jill Johnston (Chairman in the Chair)

Bill Briggs

Sandy Cameron

Richard Chandler

Val McDermott

John Ryder

Denise French (Clerk)

Nicola Clarke (RFO)

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

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Councillors John Darwin and Jenny Washburn (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 14 July and 13 August 2026

(26/52) RESOLVED: that:

(a) the minutes of the meeting of the parish council held on 14 July 2026 be approved as a correct record; and

(b) the minutes of the meeting of the parish council held on 13 August 2026 be approved as a correct record.

4. Progress Reports and Updates

4.1 Fingerpost signs – Councillor Chandler had managed to adjust the fingerpost signs to ensure they were facing the correct direction and it was no longer necessary to report any to CWAC.

4.2 BT Exchange site – work had now been undertaken by BT Facilities team to arrange improvements to the site by cutting the grass and general tidying.

4.3 Overgrown hedges from residential properties – councillors had identified some properties in their patch where overgrown hedges were impacting footpaths and/or visibility for motorists. Councillor Ryder referred to the Highways Code of Practice for Highway Safety Inspections which set out frequency of inspections and it was noted that for footways with high amenity walking areas and primary walking routes, the inspection should take place monthly. Members requested the Clerk to contact CWAC Highways regarding information on the inspection schedule, action taken on any existing cases and the process by which the parish council can report any issues identified. Members agreed they would note any issues in their areas and act accordingly.

4.4 Pizza van on the car park – the Clerk had contacted the Memorial Hall Committee and community Facebook administrators to raise awareness of any future issues of using the car park for sales of food.

(26/53) RESOLVED: that the Clerk will contact CWAC Highways regarding overhanging greenery on footpaths and seeking information on the Code of Practice for Highway Safety Inspections as outlined above.

5. Recreation Area and Pump Track

5.1 The Council considered the inspection report from July (Northwich Town Council) and August. There had been an issue identified with wire mesh in the middle of the pump track, this had been removed.

5.2 Members discussed purchasing additional gravel to improve the footpath surface. Councillor Chandler had researched options and found a suitable option that was 4mm which could be mixed with existing gravel and would then need compacting. He agreed to seek quotes for 4mm gravel and the Clerk would seek a quote from Shane Ross for compacting the gravel, a maximum budget for the gravel was set at £620.

5.3 A quote for jet washing the wet pour and equipment had been received and would be considered in Part 2.

5.4 Quotes and options for repairs to the wet pour safety surfacing would be considered in Part 2.

(26/54) RESOLVED: that gravel to reinstate the footpath be purchased at a maximum cost of £620 and Shane Ross be requested to undertake the compacting works.

6. Highways and Streetscene

6.1 The Clerk had contacted CWAC Head of Highways seeking further answers to queries raised about 3 gullies that had been cleaned in 2023, along with information on the weed spraying schedule. The Clerk had circulated the response

from the Head of Highways who had shared the parish council's follow up queries with Colas and was awaiting their response. In relation to the parish council's query about missed targets due to winter operations, the Head of Highways had explained that this meant drivers (due to working hours) were pulled off other activities such as gully cleansing, to deliver winter gritting, as they were the same workforce. She had also contacted the Streetcare team regarding weed spraying and advised that weed treatment would take place in July. Members discussed the importance of reporting issues and the Chairman would include a reminder in her next update for the newsletter. It was noted that the CWAC town and parish conference was to take place on 30 September and this would be an opportunity to raise any issues with senior CWAC councillors and officers.

6.2 Members items:

(a) restoring tarmac after roadworks – Councillor Briggs had spoken to the resident who had initially raised this and there was no need to progress this further.

(b) additional planter in the village entrance – Councillor McDermott had been approached about a planter being installed on the corner of Freshfields/Cogshall Lane. The Clerk agreed to contact CWAC Highways in the first instance regarding any permissions.

(c) Horse droppings on Freshfields – Councillor McDermott had spoken to the person leading their horse through Freshfields about the significant amount of horse droppings being left on the highway and they were now taking their horse elsewhere. She also noted that there was some restriction on use of the highway through a local bylaw.

(26/55) RESOLVED: that the Clerk contact CWAC Highways to ascertain any permissions for the installation of an additional planter at the corner of Freshfields/Cogshall Lane.

7. Cheshire West and Chester Councillors update

CWAC Councillor Marshall updated on the following points:

- Further information on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had been circulated by CWAC Councillor Gibbon which the Clerk had shared with all members. Councillor Marshall explained some of the implications including the restriction on those applications that could be called in by CWAC councillors for discussion at CWAC Planning Committee. Applications of 9 dwellings or fewer would not be considered 'major development' which meant they would be determined by a planning officer. Any request for an application to be 'called in' would be determined by a panel comprising the Planning Committee Chair and Head of Planning. Large developments (50 houses or more) could go to the Secretary of State for determination should the local council be minded to refuse. The description of 'grey belt' was unchanged and

it was an applicant's responsibility to argue that this applied to their application. The Ward Councillors had sought clarification around whether the geographical size of a site was also a factor in how the application was determined; they were also concerned that the delay in the Local Plan process would leave the council vulnerable particularly as the housing target for the previous year had not been met. He said there had been several applications in the Marbury Ward for 'planning in principle' and these types of applications did not require inclusion of any environmental or heritage elements. The regional Mayor may have some influence over planning matters.

- In relation to retrospective planning applications, the guidance said they should be treated less favourably than if the proper process had been followed.
- There were a number of current consultations on the CWAC website.
- There was funding available through the Members Budgets with the deadline of 31 December for applications.
- There were no current plans to address Winnington Bridge.
- SEND provision had improved but a significant amount of provision remained out of borough. A briefing for CWAC councillors was arranged for 16 September about a potential option to purchase land in Chester for SEND provision.

8. Highways and Streetscene (continued)

8.1 Speed issues:

(a) The latest SID data was considered; the SID had been located on The Avenue in the direction into the village. Councillor Chandler explained that the average speed was 32.1mph. The highest speed was 70.8 mph. The overall data picture showed no change from previous data. Councillor Chandler had shared the data with the local police who would deploy the TruCam. Members asked that the Clerk request that when the police attend the November parish council meeting, they bring with them data on when they have undertaken speed checks, the findings and actions. It was noted that roadworks in Northwich were currently impacting Comberbach due to diversions.

(b) Councillors discussed a rota for fixing the SID in place, delivering it to Anderton with Marbury and charging the battery. The Chairman would devise a rota. Members also agreed to consider a replacement SID for the 2027-28 budget. Councillor Ryder was thanked for his work in managing the SID over the past years.

(c) 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 had been circulated. They had explained the current locations of speed roundels in Comberbach and that Highways could not implement (irrespective of the funding source) 30mph repeater signage in areas of 30mph benefitting from street lighting. The street lighting itself acted to denote the

speed limit so the addition of 30mph plates would invalidate the speed limit and it could become unenforceable.

(26/56) RESOLVED: that

- (a) The Clerk will request that the police bring speed monitoring information and actions to the next meeting.
- (b) The possible purchase of a new SID be considered as part of the budget discussions for 2027-28.
- (c) Members will be responsible for the fixing of the SID and other management of the SID, on a rota basis.
- (d) No further action be taken on the issue of roundels in the village.

9. Accounts and financial matters

9.1 The accounts for 31 August 2026 were listed in Appendix 1.

9.2 The list of payments was in Appendix 2. The RFO noted two additional payments to HMRC and PC Websites.

9.3 Members noted that the national salary award had now been agreed with effect from 1 April 2026 and would be implemented from the September payroll including any back pay.

9.4 Following the appointment of Nicola Clarke to the post of RFO, the council considered and agreed the purchase of a laptop and mobile phone for her use along with membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks.

9.5 Members noted that the VAT reclaim had resulted in £4,819.56 being received in the bank account. The Clerk also reported that the Memorial Hall Committee had agreed to pay for the disabled parking signage and would transfer £86.52 to the parish council.

9.6 The council considered the report of the External Auditor. The RFO noted that no issues had been identified.

(26/57) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) The accounts in Appendix 1 with a balance of £59,055.59 including £27,456.91 in reserves be noted.
- (b) The list of payments in Appendix 2 be approved.
- (c) The national salary award be noted.
- (d) The purchase of a laptop for the RFO plus any additional requirements be approved to a maximum cost of £750.

- (e) The purchase of a mobile phone for the RFO be approved up to a maximum cost of £150.
- (f) The parish council will pay annual membership for the RFO to join the SLCC at a current cost of £89.
- (g) The receipt of the VAT claim and contribution towards the disabled parking signs be noted.
- (h) The External Auditor's report be noted and the RFO thanked for a successful audit.

10. Issues and Projects

10.1 Members discussed the purchase of additional lamp post poppies which could be displayed along Marbury Road as this was the main route through the village including adjacent to the memorial. It was agreed to purchase 20 additional poppies along with more cable ties.

10.2 Members considered the provision of support towards community lunches at The Spinner pub. The Clerk confirmed that the council had the General Power of Competence which gave the legal power to provide support. Members discussed the merits of the proposal noting that the Chapel provided regular community lunches and the parish council provided a free Brass Band concert at Christmas along with light refreshments; Members considered whether the council could provide additional support to the community. It was agreed to invite the landlady to complete a grant application form to enable councillors to have detailed information on which to discuss the proposal.

10.3 The CWAC Town and Parish Conference was on 30 September; the Chairman and Clerk had registered to attend. The Clerk would resend the invitation with the details and members were encouraged to attend if possible.

(26/58) RESOLVED: that:

- (a) the council will purchase an additional 20 lamp post poppies for display on the main road through Comberbach and around the War Memorial, maximum budget of £120 plus cable ties.
- (b) the Clerk will send a grant form to the Spinner Pub and the proposal for support for community lunches will be considered further at the next meeting.
- (c) the Clerk will resend the details of the CWAC Town and Parish Conference to all members for consideration.

(Note: at this point in the meeting, Members were reminded of the standing orders around length of the meeting being no more than 2.5 hours and RESOLVED to continue the meeting).

11. Planning

11.1 Planning decisions were listed in Appendix 3.

11.2 Members had been informed of a planning application adjacent to Comberbach in Crow Nest Lane, Great Budworth - Residential development for up to seven dwellings. Most Members had not been contacted by residents about this application and agreed to submit their own comments if they wished.

11.3 There were no enforcement matters.

11.4 Members noted information from CWAC Councillor Gibbon about changes to local authorities' determination of planning applications.

11.5 Members considered the CWAC Local Plan scoping exercise which was out to consultation. It sought views on which areas the Local Plan should cover and how people should be involved. Members agreed to support the views of the Marbury Ward councillors.

11.6 Members discussed the changes to the NPPF and whether the council should seek expert advice on planning matters including how to protect areas or features in the village and clarifying the definition of 'grey belt'. It was noted that the SLCC and National Association of Local Councils offered guidance and to seek information from Chalc. Members also agreed to seek informal advice.

(26/59) RESOLVED: that

(a) the planning update be noted.

(b) The Clerk will respond to the CWAC Local Plan scoping exercise by supporting the views of the Marbury Ward councillors.

(c) The option to seek expert advice on planning matters be considered at the next meeting and Members and the Clerk will seek out any sources of support or advice in the meantime.

12. Correspondence

The list of correspondence had been circulated.

The Clerk reported that a request had been received for the installation of a 'cake shed' on the council's car park and it was agreed to consider this at the next meeting. The Clerk had also circulated an invitation to the Cheshire Community Action AGM.

(26/60) RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.

13. Representative Reports

- Comberbach Memorial Hall Management Committee – nothing to update.
- Police Liaison – Members had received the latest PCSO notes. The police had confirmed attendance at the November meeting. The Clerk advised that the next PCSO Surgery was on Friday 18 September at 3pm, she would recirculate the details. Councillor Chandler would attend the meeting in October hosted by the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- School Liaison – nothing to update.
- Fete Committee – nothing to update.
- Bowling Club – no update.

14. Exclusion of Public and Press – Part 2

(26/61) 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.

15. Recreation Area quotes

(26/62) RESOLVED: That

(a) Delegated power is granted to the Clerk to accept the quote from Chris Spruce Cleaning Service Limited, subject to confirming the warranty details and seeking advice from the company about the timing of the cleaning.

(b) The quote from Northwich Town Council for the repairs to the wet pour be approved subject to including priming the edges of the wet pour as part of the work.

16. Additional maintenance work in the village

(26/63) RESOLVED: that the quote from Shane Ross for additional maintenance work in the sum of £100 per visit and the work to be undertaken twice a year, be approved.

17. Resignation of Stephen Penwill, Responsible Financial Officer

Members had appointed Nicola Clarke as RFO and the handover period was ongoing. It was agreed that Stephen would remain in post until 21 October to facilitate the handover including the meeting of Finance Committee on 13 October. Stephen had requested that he be permitted to purchase his parish council laptop. Nicola had undertaken research and suggested an indicative price of between £450 - £550. The laptop would have all parish council information removed and Nicola would change all relevant passwords.

(26/64) RESOLVED: that

(a) Stephen Penwill will remain in post till 21 October to assist with a handover of the role.

(b) Stephen be permitted to purchase his parish council laptop at a cost of £500.

(Note: Stephen Penwill left the room during discussion of this item)

17. Registering land in the ownership of the parish council

Councillor Cameron advised that he was still awaiting confirmation of progress from Chambers Fletcher about the conclusion of the registration process following confirmation of the land value.

(26/64) RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

The Meeting closed at 9.25pm.

The next meeting of Comberbach Parish Council will be held on Tuesday 24 November 2026 at 6.30pm.

Signed Chairman

Appendix 1 Accounts for 31 August 2026

	Current A/c	Savings A/c	Total
Santander	31,519.28	2,219.84	33,739.12
Unity Trust	79.40	25,237.07	25,316.47
Total	31,598.68	27,456.91	£59,055.59

Appendix 2 Payments

Item	Amount	Power
PKF Littlejohn – External audit fee	£252.00	LGA 1972 s.111
J Ryder – repair items	£30.64	LGA 1972 s.111
Synchroprint – newsletter printing	£278.78	LGA 1972 s.111
Northwich Town Council – play inspection	£90.00	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 June 26	£25.46	LGA 1972 s.111
DD – Babble, MS Office License July 26	£25.46	LGA 1972 s.111
DD – Tesco Mobile, Junel 26	£8.42	LGA 1972 s.111
DD – Tesco Mobile, July 26	£8.42	LGA 1972 s.111
DD – Unity Trust account Fee Sept 26	£7.00	LGA 1972 s.111

Receipts

Item	Amount	Power
HMRC Vat claim	£4,819.56	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);	Wed 22 Dec 2021	Awaiting decision

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		
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
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	Approved
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
26/01999/FUL – addition of dormers to front and rear of existing garage to create home office and ancillary accommodation for elderly relative – 1 Hough Lane Cottages	30 June 2026	Awaiting decision
26/02328/FUL – demolition of existing garage. Single storey side and rear extensions, first floor extension. Alterations to windows and	27 July 2026	Awaiting decision

doors and widening of drive way entrance wall and installation of new gates, 41 Senna Lane.		
--	--	--

DRAFT