

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY COMMITTEE HELD ON
17.04.25**

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

For the papers discussed at the meeting, please see the [Agenda and Papers of the Community Committee on 17 April 2025](#)

PRESENT: Committee members:

- Cllr Richard Walton (Chair)
- Cllr Glen Williams (Vice Chair)
- Cllr Dave Brown
- Cllr Suzy Firkin
- Cllr Emma Hall
- Cllr Sally Ann Holland

Ex Officio: Cllr Kay Wesley (Mayor),

Non-Committee Members:

- Cllr Rob Moreton

Officers: David McGifford, Chief Officer

Members of Press 0

Members of Public 1 guest speaker

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Cllr Dawn Allen, Cllr Mark Edwardson, Cllr Susan Mead, Cllr Shaun Radcliffe

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

CO/43/2425 resolved to approve and sign the [Community Committee minutes](#) held on 30 January 2025 as a correct record.

3. Declaration of Interest

Declarations were received by Cllrs David Brown, Sally Ann Holland Rob Moreton on matters relating to Cheshire East Council. Glen Williams, Suzy Firkin and Richard Walton on matters relating to Congleton Partnership

4. Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions from members of the public

5. **Urgent Items**

Cllr Kay Wesley raised two urgent items (details in appendix 1)

- Childcare Crisis
- Transgender ruling

6. **Cheshire Police**

There was no representation or report from Cheshire Police

7. **Active Listening with B.E.C.K** (Presentation Frances Bromley)

The committee received a presentation aimed at empowering communities to realise the value of Active Listening as a life skill, with a focus on reducing self-harm, harm to others and suicide.

Frances requested that the information she provided be used to help promote Active Listening within the Council.

8. **Committee updates**

Councillors noted the committee's update paper.

9. **White Ribbon Working Group Minutes**

CO/44/2425 resolved the minutes of the White Ribbon Working Group on 11th March 2025

9.1 Anti-Spiking Campaign Update

CO/45/2425 resolved to agree that the work of Officer Rachel McCarthy be acknowledged and suggested that it would be:

1. Useful to get feedback on the use of the tests and any results on where spiking had taken place.
2. Promote the project to local doctors and schools.

10. **Community Safety Working Group**

CO/46/2425 resolved to receive the notes and an update from the chair of the Community Safety Working Group meetings held on the 6th February and 27th March 2025

11. **Health and Wellbeing Working Group**

CO/47/2425 resolved to approve the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Working Group held on the 20th February 2025.

12. Equal Access Advisory Group

CO/48/2425 resolved to receive the minutes of the Equal Access Advisory Group meetings on the 24th January and the 8th April 2025.

12.1 Disability Welcome Scheme

CO/49/2425 resolved to note this report

12.2 Terms of reference – Equal Access Advisory Group

CO/50/2425 resolved to note the Terms of Reference for the Equal Access Advisory Group

13. Communications Update

CO/51/2425 resolved to receive and note a report from the Town Council's Communications and Marketing Officer, Debbie Coxon, highlighting the Town Council's Communications activities from 9th January to 8th April 2025.

14. Congleton Community Projects Service Level Agreement

CO/52/2425 resolved To approve the Congleton Community Projects Service Level Agreement and sought clarification on the quantity of Play Days during the summer ideally 4.

15. Town Centre Updates

15.1 Town Centre Code of Conduct

CO/53/2425 resolved that the Town Centre Code of Conduct should state – That Cyclists should, if able, dismount. If not able to dismount proceed at a walking pace i.e. 4 mph.

15.2 Community Infrastructure Levy Contributions CIL'S

CO54/2425 resolved to note that the Strategy Working Group reviewing the Community Infrastructure Levy contributions of £21,684 could either:

1. Contributing towards a solution to traffic misuse of Bridge Street
2. Improvements/maintenance of town centre public realm ie bins, benches planters, signage
3. Public Toilet provision

Suggested that this could be taken to the Annual Town Meeting to receive residents' views.

16. Consultation response to CEC Vision For Transport

CO/55/2425 resolved to approve the proposed response to the CEC Vision for Transport Consultation subject to the inclusion of the Transport for New Homes Checklist.

17. Congleton Partnership Updates

CO56/2425 resolved to note the report Councillors from Congleton Partnership on main events for 2025.

Appendix 1

Urgent item CTC Community Committee 17th April 2025 - Childcare Crisis

I have been approached by several early years childcare providers in Congleton Including Daintry Hall Nursery, The Nursery and Friendly Faces Day Nursery, to ask for help in dealing with an immediate financial crisis they are facing, and I wanted to raise this with Council colleagues today as an urgent item, as the situation is certainly urgent for these businesses. In September 2025, the government-funded ('free') childcare that parents can access increases from 15 to 30 hours per week for all children from 9 months.

The government funding is not sufficient for providers to support their nursery outgoings. Funding rates have not risen in proportion to the living wage rise, the increased Employer's National Insurance costs, and overhead costs. The funding per hour is below the cost of delivering the service per hour. If any other business's overheads increased they would be able to raise their prices to remain viable and customers could choose to use their service or not. Nurseries have no flexibility to charge the rates that would make their business viable, due to the government's funding formula.

The Department For Education also introduced new regulations that came into force this month, with regard to additional costs, such as for lunch, that providers can charge for. The new rules say that nurseries cannot insist on these top-up charges any more, leaving them no way to make up the shortfall.

This has been exacerbated by the expansion of free childcare to all children from 9 months. Previously, Nurseries could make a loss on the government-funded 'free' childcare provision for 3- and 4-year-olds but could claw some of this back by charging more for the younger children. Now this option is gone and many providers are on the brink of bankruptcy.

The Early Years Alliance recently conducted a survey amongst Childcare Providers, which found that, over the next 12 months:

94% of respondents are likely to increase fees for non-government funded hours (private payers) to make up for the shortfall in funded hours.

77% said they are likely to introduce or increase the price of optional extras, such as nappies, meals and trips.

68% said they are likely to restrict when the government-funded hours can be claimed.

28% said they are likely to permanently close.

The nursery in Congleton has closed in the last two months, and more will follow if something is not done. This will potentially create more unemployment for parents in a town that already has a shortage of childcare places.

And of course, the biggest problems are for the nurseries that have the highest proportion of fully government-funded places, in other words, those serving lower-income families. These

families are less likely to be able to afford the additional costs, and therefore, it is these nurseries that are most likely to close.

Some childcare providers have stated they will not offer any of the government-funded hours because it is not viable for them to do so. This will have the opposite effect from the government's goals of 'free childcare', excluding many families from being able to access childcare provision at all.

The government has recognised the burden of the additional Employer's National Insurance and is providing grants to cover the additional costs for early years settings in schools.

BUT...

Private day nurseries and childminders will not receive the grant! They offer most of our local childcare and this is another financial hit to businesses that are already on the brink. In addition, nurseries haven't been given enough time (since 21st February) to make educated choices and plans to help their business stay viable.

This is having a detrimental effect on many providers' mental health as the pressures mount to deliver more services with less funding.

There is now a real danger that several local providers will be lost. We have already lost one Congleton Nursery (Lady Bugs and Slugs), due to these changes.

I realise it is unlikely there is a quick solution to this problem, and I know some of the providers have already met with our local MP to lobby the government.

I would like to ask the Chief Officer to meet with the business owners concerned and I, to discuss their situation and explore any ways in which the Town Council can help.

YouTube Explainer: <https://youtu.be/m5Pmsc4rN0g?feature=shared>

Urgent item CTC Community Committee 17th April 2025

Supreme Court Ruling on the definition of 'woman' in the Equality Act 2010

After this week's ill-informed Supreme Court ruling and the government's resultant decision to roll back the rights of trans people, I'd like to inform Councillors that I have heard from trans women in Congleton who are now very frightened.

This has not been helped by some very hateful comments in Congleton's social media groups. Please offer our trans residents your support and empathy.

I'd also like to point out that I, and my party will always stand up for the rights of trans women and trans men to live their lives 100% in their adopted gender, without fear of violence, persecution or exclusion.

I'm sure none of us want to see hate crime in our town.

The rights of trans people are human rights.