

Marbury Ward Interim Update - February 2026

Just a short update this month. We are opting to provide a more comprehensive update every other month from March, to reduce repetition. We will however flag anything that is time sensitive in the intervening months. We are a week later than normal this month, just because we wanted to get sight of the budget papers before we updated our Parishes.

For February there are a number of consultations running and the deadline for submission to the **National Planning Framework is 10th March**. This is of great importance to our rural communities. We will circulate our submission before the end of the month, so feel free to extract anything you agree with for your own submission.

The other big issue is **Local Authority Finances** - as much as we welcome the 3-year settlement, it also raises several questions as the budget formula/allocation has also changed. Ultimately, we are still facing a funding gap, rising Adults and Children's Social Care costs and pressure on bought-in services / Council owned companies due to increased wages and eNI (Employers National Insurance) Costs.

Despite the high increases in Central Government taxation, this is clearly not cascading down to Local Authorities, so there is an assumption that increased Council tax, Police and Fire precepts will be used to help bridge the gap. This is of great concern to us, with wider rising costs, energy prices and general pressure on our local economy. Rest-assured we will be raising this at Full Council but ultimately it is the Labour Group In Administration in CWaC, with a Labour Government, so we are expecting the full 4.99% increase to be voted through yet again.

Regards

Cllr's Lynn Gibbon, Phil Marshall, Norman Wright

LIVE CONSULTATIONS

Planning Policy Consultations

What it's about: Various planning policy related consultations (e.g., Local Plan or other planning policy matters).

- Planning policy shapes future development, land use, housing, employment space and environmental protection.
- It influences how towns and villages like those in the borough develop over the next decade.

Deadline: Various, see link

[Consultation Link:](#)

This may be of interest it is not on the CWaC website

Peak Cluster Project is holding its first public consultation from January 12 to February 27, 2026, to gather feedback on a major Carbon Capture, Usage, and Storage (CCUS) infrastructure proposal starting in Derbyshire and Staffordshire through to the sea in the Wirral. Key Details of the Peak Cluster Consultation (2026)

Purpose: To decarbonise the cement industry with a pipeline 121miles long passing through Cheshire East and West with a proposed spur into the LSEP works in Northwich. There is an interactive map.

[Consultation Link:](#)

Consultation: National Planning Policy Framework – Proposed Reforms and Other Changes to the Planning System

[Consultations Link](#)

Deadline for responses: 11:45pm, 10 March 2026 (extended from December 2025 start)

What the consultation is about

- Seeks views on a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - the central Government policy that guides planning decisions and local plan preparation across England.
- Also invites comments on other wider planning system changes, including proposals on:
 - Data centres and on-site energy generation policy
 - Standardised inputs for viability assessments (how affordable housing and community benefits are calculated)
 - Reforming site size thresholds for policy application and possibly other development standards.
- A draft NPPF text and a detailed list of consultation questions have been published alongside this consultation for commenters to review before responding.

Why rural parishes and communities should engage

Rural areas like those in Cheshire West & Chester have particular planning sensitivities that make this consultation especially important:

1. Influences Local Planning Policy Direction

- The NPPF sets the national planning rules that local plans must follow. Any revision can change how housing needs are calculated, how much development is encouraged and what protections exist for the countryside.

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- Rural communities could see changes in growth expectations for villages, how parishes approach neighbourhood planning and how local land designations (like green belt or areas of outstanding natural beauty) are treated.

2. Affordable Housing & Viability Assessments

- Standardised inputs into viability assessments could change how local authorities negotiate community benefits (e.g., affordable homes, local infrastructure) on development sites.
- In rural areas where development is more marginal, this could significantly affect the amount and type of affordable housing delivered.

3. Infrastructure and Energy Generation Policy

- Policies on onsite energy generation (e.g., renewable energy in new developments) directly affect rural parishes where energy infrastructure, farm diversification and sustainability ambitions intersect.

4. Thresholds for Planning Policy Application

- Changes to thresholds for applying certain policies can affect small-scale development - which is often the lifeblood of rural growth. A new threshold could mean valuable affordable or community-focused schemes are treated differently by planning policy.

5. Ensuring Local Voice and Rural Reality Are Heard

- National policies frequently carry unintended consequences if rural circumstances aren't properly accounted for - such as infrastructure capacity, transport links, environmental constraints and housing need locally.
- Participation allows rural parishes to put evidence forward that one-size-fits-all planning changes do not always work in practice.

How to submit a response

You can respond online directly via the consultation page using the UK Government's feedback portal.

Alternatively, responses can be emailed to:

PlanningPolicyConsultation@communities.gov.uk or posted to the Planning Policy Consultation Team (contact details on the consultation page).

Financial update

The increases proposed below are presented with concern as they are mainly caused by increases in National Insurance, reduced funding from central government and an overhang from savings budgeted in previous years - to present balanced budget. (This does not include the precept increases proposed by your Parish Councils)

Cheshire West and Chester Council for 2026/27 (Band D)

This proposal has yet to be agreed - will be debated and agreed at Budget Council Feb 26th

As it stands - Key Details for 2026/27:

- **Proposed Increase:** 4.99% total (2.99% core + 2% adult social care).
- **Total Band D Cost:** Projected at £2,076.79, an increase of £98.70 for the year.
- **Context:** The increase aims to address a £150 million funding gap over four years and requires £33 million in planned savings.

Cheshire Police Precept 2026/2027 (Band D)

- **Total Annual Cost:** £295.44 per year.
- **Increase:** An extra **£18.50 per year** (approx. 36p a week) for a Band D property.
- **Details:** This represents a 6.7% hike, which was approved after the Police and Crime Commissioner secured special permission to exceed the typical £15 cap to save 30 PCSO roles.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Precept 2026/2027 (Band D)

- **Total Annual Cost:** Now just over £100
- **26_27 Increase:** An extra **£5.00 per year**.
- **Details:** The Fire Authority approved this increase on February 11, 2026, to manage budget pressures and fund investments in fire stations and equipment.

Summary for Band D Property (2026/27)

- **Police:** +£18.50
- **Fire:** +£5.00
- **Total Increase:** **£23.50 per year** (plus the increases from CWaC)

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