

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021

**PRESENT:**      **Councillors:** Chapman (in the Chair), Austin, Karlake, Merryweather, Morgan, Parsons, Seaman, Standbridge, Thomason and Thompson  
                  **The Clerk:**      A Marabese  
                  **Others:**          Ward Councillors Brown and Liddiard, and 5 members of the public

The Chairman declared the virtual meeting open at 7:47pm.

### 570. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None required.

### 571. CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. The Chairman thanked all participants of the meeting which was being held via video link. The Chairman then explained that during the 15-minute public session interventions would be limited to 3 minutes per person. All participants to the meeting were asked to 'mute' themselves and to raise a hand when wishing to speak. Councillor voting would be conducted by a show of hands. Cllrs Standbridge and Morgan are acting as the meeting 'moderators'.

### 572. MEMBERS INTERESTS

- a. To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda and requests for dispensation.  
None received or requested.

### 573. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:48pm) the Chairman suspended Standing Orders to receive reports from Ward Councillors, village organisations and to allow members of the public to address the Council in relation to items on the agenda or request matters to be discussed at a subsequent meeting.

Ward Councillor Liddiard advised the meeting that:

- COVID update
  - Infection numbers are increasing in line with the rest of the country. There were 806 new cases last week which represented 24% of those tested.
  - The vaccination rollout at Shefford Health Centre is going well. It is likely that some resident's will be invited to have their vaccination at hospital vaccination centres.
  - All care homes vaccinations were completed last week.
  - Updates on vaccinations can be found on the PCG website.
  - Covid home testing for residents is quick and easy to use but there are also walk-in centres at local hospitals.
  - All schools remain closed except for vulnerable children and those with key worker parents.
  - Additional support is being provided to children in receipt of free school meals.
  - Laptops have been provided by the DfE are arriving in local schools.
  - Covid 19 stewards were working in Shefford today. They are engaging with residents and explaining lockdown rules to them. Any non-compliance is referred to the Police.
  - The revenues and benefits team are under huge pressure to ensure grant aid relief if passed down to eligible organisations and businesses.

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- CBC are reviewing discretionary grant funding and will open this up to more organisations. 2 Meppershall businesses have already been contacted so that they are aware of this.
- CBC 2021-22 Budget consultation – Online (or paper copies available upon request) consultation launched. The Government have allowed councils to add a 3% levy for adult social care to council tax (this is the most challenging area of the budget for CBC) and CBC is proposing to add to this a 1.93% council tax increase. The monetary impact of the pandemic on CBC finances has resulted in a £8-10 million pound reduction in reserves. A lot of things are not being done at present and provision is stretched.
- CBC traffic Management Committee Meeting – Cllr Seaman presented the petition to the meeting. It was well received and officers have been requested to carry out an assessment of the issues raised by Cllr Ian Dalgarno. Ward Councillors will follow this up with Lisa Wright the CBC Highways Safety Officer to ensure surveys etc. are carried out at an appropriate time.

Ward Councillor Brown advised the meeting that:

- Fix My Street – Ward Councillors will be attending a training session on Fix My Street tomorrow. This is the new Highways issues reporting system being introduced by CBC at the end of the month.
- Tree planting – Grants are still available and are not match funded.
- Beadlow Development – no further update.
- Ward Councillor Grant Funding – Up to £250 match funded grants still available.
- Local Plan – Waiting for the results of the Local Plan evaluation but a decision is not expected until the late spring or early summer.
- New leader of CBC council will be announced on 14<sup>th</sup> January.

Members of the public asked the following questions / made the following comments:

- The Chairman wished to thank Ward Councillors and CBC Officers for the rapid response to fly tipping on Chapel Road last week
- How is it possible to report a string of potholes on the highway rather than individually? E.g.: Shefford Road has 10+ potholes. *Cllr Liddiard agreed to send the CBC Highways custodian an email requesting they walk from Hoo road to the village entrance to review and mark up the potholes.*
- Regarding agenda item 578.b.ii a resident suggested that attendance at the parish council meeting would be better than a pre-recorded video.
- A CBC Ward Councillor grant was awarded to the Messenger. When will the money be received? *Cllr Brown to chase.*
- Can the Parish Council consider drawing to the attention of village residents the fact that The Mow proposed development will be discussed at the CBC Development Management Committee meeting on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January?
- Croudace have made an 'offer' regarding Centenary Field. If it is inadequate should the Parish Council not take legal action? *The Chairman advised that this will be discussed as part of agenda item 581.a.ii.*
- Regarding The Mow. If planning does go ahead can the Parish Council remove the fencing as this could be utilised elsewhere on parish council owned land?

Standing orders were reinstated at 8.13pm

### 574. MINUTES

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- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020.  
*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman of this meeting (at the first opportunity). Carried*

### 575. CLERKS REPORT AND MATTERS ARISING

- a. To request clarification on matters arising and items within the Clerks report.
- Stocken House reserved matters application and meetings –
    - Green Space – Initial discussion with Paul Waterfield of Davidsons. As the Inspector did not provide for any commuted sum Davidsons will not provide one with the green space. They have no problems in MPC taking ownership however they are in legal discussions with a management company and so an MPC decision would need to be made quickly. They would be willing to work with us on play equipment choice. Handover of open space would need clarification as this depends on s106 agreements and conditions set by CBC. Possibly in 4 years' time. NB: There is a legal obligation for land to be left for a road through to open land behind. Clerk and Paul Waterfield have suggested that a small team from both organisations discuss viable options for the open space via a zoom meeting. *The Clerk was asked to progress this meeting and report back accordingly.*
    - Site work – Davidsons have confirmed that roads & sewers contractor will be starting on site on the 11th January 2021. Paul will advise of any road closures. I am now in contact with their communications department and have asked for contact details for the site manager (when one is appointed). They are more than willing to work on communication and resolution of issues should any arise.
    - Approval – CBC granted approval prior to Christmas without application going to DMC. Ward Cllrs aware of this. Apparently not called into DMC if ROW connection made with Polehanger Farm. Planning officer is Benjamin Tracy. Decision notice sent with this update.

### 576. PROCEDURES

- a. To consider response to Beds Fire and Rescue Service Priorities and Budget Consultation.  
*Councillors agreed that they would all respond to this consultation as individuals.*

### 577. FINANCE

- a. **Update of Parish Facilities purchases** - To review and approve income, expenditure and purchase orders for parish facilities.  
There has been no movement in parish facilities purchases.
- b. **2020/2021 Actual v Budget** – To receive 2020/2021 actual v budgeted spend report.  
The Clerk presented the previously circulated reports and there were no questions or queries raised.
- c. **2021/2022 Budget** – To consider and approve 2021/2022 budget.  
The Clerk presented the previously circulated proposed 2021-2022 budget and suggested reserves to council and responded to questions raised on expected expenditure, income and VAT recovery. Councillors reviewed the budget line by line and made changes to

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some budget lines in the meeting e.g.: increase in Clerk salary and on costs and cemetery fencing. It was noted that an agreement regarding fencing for the Cemetery may be required with the Village Hall. Councillors discussed the Clerks hours and agreed that it was abundantly clear that the Clerk is being asked to do more work and that she is struggling to complete this within the current 13 hours per week.

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to approve an increase in hours for the Clerk up to 18hrs per week from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 (Clerk able to flex time as required). Carried.*

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to approve the 2021-2022 budget option 2 as amended during the meeting (Income £177,888 & expenditure £232,872). Carried.*

**d. 2021/2022 Precept** – To consider and approve 2021/2022 precept request.

The Clerk presented the previously circulated proposed 2021-2022 precept options and based upon the approved budget explained the impact on both general and earmarked reserves. Councillors discussed the merits of each option and the impact on reserves.

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to approve and to set a precept of £52,316 which equates to Band D Council Tax charge of £61.33 (increase of 2.00% or £1.20 on 2020-2021). The Clerk was also asked to write an article for the Messenger. Carried.*

**e. Document approval** – To approve journal entries, bank reconciliations and bank statements.

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to approve, Journal 65, Bank Statements and Reconciliations numbered 014 savings account and 1365 current account, and that they be signed electronically by Cllrs Morgan and Standbridge. Carried.*

**f. Tollers invoice** – If required to consider response from Tollers Solicitors subsequent to Clerks rejection of invoice received due to non-adherence with our approved costings with them.

The Clerk reported that Tollers LLP had provided invoices at £940+VAT, later reduced to £750+VAT for work carried out in September 2020. As the agreed price with BBW (later Tollers) was agreed at £500+VAT the Clerk is challenging the invoices.

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to approve payment to Tollers prior to the February meeting if invoice received for £500+VAT as per original agreement with BBW. If Tollers do not amend invoice then Clerk is to instigate a formal complaint. Carried.*

**g. Orders for the payment of money**

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the schedule of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment. Carried.*

| Payment requests received before agenda published |                               |   |         |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---------|
| BACSS39   | Lexis Nexis                   | Arnold Baker Book   | £119.99 |
| BACSS40   | The National Alotment Society | Membership Renewal  | £66.00  |
| BACSS41   | Mayo-Wynne Baxter             | Cost of Highways searches - Brookmead                                   | £60.00  |
| BACSS42   | A Marabese                    | Expenses (mileage, amazon web storage, stamps, meeting drinks, mileage) | £139.60 |

## 578. PLANNING AND HOUSING

### a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration

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- i. CB/20/04600/FULL - 4 Taylors Close, SG17 5NH - Two storey side extension and re-roofing of existing garage.  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Secoded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council has no comments on 20/04600. Carried.*
- ii. CB/20/04542/FULL - 4 Rectory Road, SG17 5NB - Demolition of the existing single storey conservatory and replacement with a part single, part two storey rear extension. . Demolition of significant part of the existing outbuilding, with a smaller building being retained as an office/workshop. Erection of a new 3-bedroom dwelling on land between no.4 and no.2A Rectory Road.  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Secoded Cllr Chapman.. Resolved that the Council has no comments on 20/04542. Carried.*
- iii. CB/20/03505/VOC - 84 Fildyke Road, SG17 5LU - Variation of Condition 19 of planning permission CB/18/03306/FULL (Demolition of 1.5 storey cottage and erection of 5 No 2 storey dwellings with a new access road and car parking). Elevations changes to Plots 3, 4 and 5 and additional ground floor space to Plot 3. Amendments to this application in respect of the above property. Revised Description Received.  
The Clerk advised that the re-consultation is due to revised descriptions and there is no real change to the plans.  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Secoded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council has no comments on 20/03505. Carried.*
- iv. CB/20/04733/FULL - 3C Fildyke Road, SG17 5LT - Proposed single storey rear extension, two storey front extension and new front bay window.  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Secoded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council has no comments on 20/04733. Carried.*

*Note: For planning applications that are submitted between meetings and for which an extension to the comment's deadline date is not given, powers have been delegated to the Clerk (with a proposed response circulated to the Council) to submit comments to CBC Planning.*

### **b. Other Planning Matters for consideration**

- i. To consider representation at next Development Management Committee on 13 January 2021 when the Planning Officer is seeking to approve CB/20/02860/OUT - The Mow, SG17 5LP - Resubmission Outline Application: Demolition of one dwelling & erection of 13 dwellings and ancillary works.  
Councillors discussed the proposed content of a speech to the DMC in the light of the Planning Officers recommendation for approval. It was agreed that it was prudent to include specific management of construction traffic on site and to ask committee members how they see this development as being sustainable when adding it to those already granted development in the village. It was also noted that the planning officer's report refers to Meppershall as a 'large' village but the submitted Local Plan classes Meppershall as a 'small' village. This confusion may be resulting in the reliance on incorrect policies.  
*Cllr Liddiard requested links to the reference of Meppershall as a 'small' village so that he could discuss with CBC Planning.*  
*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Secoded Cllr Thomason. Resolved that Cllr Karlake represent MPC at the DMC meeting regarding 20/02860. Carried.*

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- ii. To consider publication of letter from MPC to CBC concerning planning enforcement and response from CBC in Messenger and to consider suggestion of inviting Richard Proctor of CBC to next MPC meeting or conducting interview with him for circulation on social media.

Councillors discussed the reasons for inviting Mr Proctor to the next MPC meeting and concluded that the goal was to improve councillor and resident understanding of what Enforcement Officers can deal with and the course of action residents need to take if an issue is outside the remit of CBC. Crucial to this is an understanding of legislation that enforcement must adhere to. It was further suggested that a 'zoom surgery' on planning enforcement could be proposed with questions forwarded from residents. *Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that letters between MPC and CBC concerning planning enforcement be published on the MPC website, in the Messenger and on Facebook, and that they Clerk contact Mr Proctor with an invitation to an MPC meeting or a 'zoom' enforcement surgery. Carried.*

### 579. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

#### a. Report from Cllr Thomason

Cllr Thomason reported there was no steering group meeting last month but that he and the Clerk had worked on the draft plan and that the group is close to having a plan for publication. Next steps are SEA screening by CBC and then the Regulation 14 consultation. A steering group meeting will be held next month before the MPC meeting.

### 580. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

#### a. Discussion on any highways issues if required

Cllr Seaman reported the following:

- A response on behalf of MPC has been submitted on aircraft routing as part of the London Luton Airport Consultation and that Cllr Seaman is planning to attend future webinars on this.
- Gritting lorries are spreading prior to contractor road sweepers which means that grit is being swept away before night fall. Can Ward Councillors request that gritting run schedules are amended so that this does not happen?
- Subsequent to the presentation of the petition concerning traffic calming measures for Shefford Road no timescales have been provided on traffic monitoring and other actions although signage and a raised kerb is to be installed outside the village stores and Post Office next month.

### 581. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

#### a. Centenary Field Parish Facilities – Update from Clerk and to consider / approve actions specific to Snagging list resolution and handover, specifically:

- i. To review snagging list

No change from previous month

- ii. To approve if available proposal from Croudace Homes Ltd on the handover of Centenary Field to the Parish Council.

The Clerk on behalf of the working group confirmed that in response to the letter received from Croudace on 14<sup>th</sup> December a response had been sent on 18<sup>th</sup> December with 7 items requiring clarification and a proposed timeline for a response.

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The Clerk followed this letter up with a call on 5<sup>th</sup> January to the Croudace solicitor after they missed a proposed deadline in the letter. No response has been received to date. Cllr Thompson has investigated how to invoke the bond. It is proposed that the Clerk chase the Croudace solicitor one more time for a response.

*Councillors agreed that the Working Group was doing all it could to obtain a response from Croudace and that an update would be expected for the next meeting.*

**b. Allotments** – Update from Clerk.

The Clerk reported that she is chasing outstanding rents.

**c. Community Orchard** – To approve cost for pruning trees.

The Clerk declared an interest in this agenda item as the individual asked to prune the orchard trees was her father. Councillors noted the interest and confirmation from Mr Carne that Mr Marabese had the knowledge of what was required to prune the trees.

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that Mr Marabese prune the orchard trees at a cost of £100 with assistance from Mr Carne. Carried.*

**d. Old Road Meadow** – To consider action required after dumping of tree and hedge clippings forming a bonfire in Old Road Meadow.

The Clerk reported that the bonfire created at Old Road Meadow had been lit without the knowledge or permission of the Parish Council.

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thomason. Resolved that a leaflet drop of local homes is carried out requesting that residents cease and desist from dumping green waste and lighting bonfires at Old Road Meadow and that the Clerk look to promote Old Road Meadow as a village green space. Carried.*

**e. Brookmead Fence** – To consider removal of metal fencing installed at the end of The Mow.

Councillors considered the possible approval of The Mow for development and the potential loss of fencing assets together with no response from CBC regarding adoption of the metal fencing. The resolution to gift the wooden fence to The Mow in November 2020 was also discussed and it was agreed that as the Clerk had not written to The Mows owners yet with any proposal regarding the wooden fencing, that in the event it should be removed for construction works that it should be returned to the Parish Council and reused elsewhere.

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thomason. Resolved that the metal estate fencing installed between The Mow and Brookmead be removed at a cost of £300 for use elsewhere and that the Clerk write to The Mow landowners requesting that the wooden fencing and concrete posts be returned to MPC or that MPC be allowed to remove them prior to any potential construction work starting on site. Carried.*

### 582. HEALTH & SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

**a. Community Safety** – To receive report from Cllr Seaman

Cllr Seaman reported:

- He had attended a fire safety session with the Community Safety Team and that articles on this will be in the February edition of the Messenger. In addition he noted that the Fire Service offer a free fire detection and carbon monoxide fitting service to eligible residents.

### 583. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

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HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021

The Chairman reminded everyone that the next meeting would be the 8<sup>th</sup> February and declared the meeting closed at 22:06pm

Where no signature exists in this electronic version, a hard copy version is available for inspection from the Clerk.

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