

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 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 9 members of the public
The Chairman declared the virtual meeting open at 7:45pm.

599. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None – all councillors present

600. 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 public session interventions would be limited to 15 minutes as per usual. 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. Cllr Morgan was appointed as the meeting ‘moderator’.

601. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

602. 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 Brown advised the meeting that:

- This month's edition of the Meppershall Messenger covers many items from CBC including details on the budget, Census 2021, test centres etc.
- Cllr match funded grants of up to £250 are still available for this year.
- Green waste collections have restarted from 1st March.
- A meeting with the Schools for the Future portfolio holder is anticipated.
- Polehanger Farms have been successful in their application for funding to plan a new apple orchard to which the public will have access.
- Fix my Street is now up and working well. Residents are encouraged to use it to report highways issues.
- 100 High Street planning application – Ward councillors will call this in to the DMC if the Planning Officer recommends approval.

Ward Councillor Liddiard advised the meeting that:

- COVID update
 - Cases continue to drop with 186 new cases reported last week.
 - CBC have taken control of all Track and Trace in the CBC area. They currently have an 80-90% follow up rate and are the first council in the country to take control of Track and Trace.
 - A new mass vaccination centre has been opened at Biggleswade Hospital.

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 2021

- Every child in Year 7 and above must complete a lateral flow test with parental approval.
- £15m of grants have been distributed to business via CBC. CBC has been asked to distribute another £7m by Central Government. However if CBC go over the £7m then CBC taxpayers will pay therefore CBC are adopting a cautious approach.
- 94% of children at secondary transition stage got their first choice of school.

Questions from the public:

- Are we going to discuss the 100 High Street planning application and the 40 Shefford Road Planning Inspectorate appeal? *Chairman – Yes, these are agenda items.*
- A report regarding the Shefford Road VAR not working was raised on Fix my Street however the response given says that there is nothing that can be done to fix it. Why? *It was suggested that Cllr Seaman as Highways Spokesman write to CBC Highways and request additional information on the issue subsequent to a response from Ward Cllr Liddiard who said in the meeting he would follow this up on behalf of MPC as he has contact with portfolio holder.*
- Is the opening of Biggleswade Hospital as a vaccination centre in addition to the Weatherly Centre? *Cllr Liddiard, Yes.*
- The traffic in Fildyke Road has been appalling in the last few weeks due to Shefford Road closures and parked construction vehicles on footpaths on the bend near the construction site at 84 Fildyke. *It was suggested that residents send photos of obstructing vehicles to the Clerk for forwarding to the contractor.*
- Can Ward Councillors please feed back to CBC the uselessness of approving planning applications with conditions that cannot be enforced?
- Can I have an update on Centenary Field, why is it taking so long to hand over and what works are planned? *The Clerk advised that an 'agreement in principle' has been reached with the contractor and MPC and that legal agreements and other transfers and documentation would now require agreement. This involves other third parties and so is not a simple or relatively quick issue. Despite the relentless efforts of the working group to engage with the developer and resolve issues it has often been frustrating at how long they have taken to respond. Planned works to Centenary Filed include land drainage, landscaping, additional fence installation, extensive pitch works, and installation of new outdoor gym and later in the year play equipment. The Clerk stressed the need to be clear with residents on expectations of access to the field once it is handed over as the works will require large areas to be cordoned off while contractors are on site. It is hoped that the play areas will be made available during works (if possible). The Clerk reminded everyone at the meeting that individuals who continue to remove barriers to gain entry to the areas do so at their own risk, and that in doing so they are trespassing. She also commented on the number of dog owners who are currently using the area and in particular the pitch to exercise their dogs off lead and the amount of dog mess that has been left on the ground. This is contrary to current bylaws and something that MPC will need to consider mitigating against once Centenary Field is transferred to the Council.*
- Crackle Hill track is very muddy and is being ruined by vehicles that drive its length to empty the dog bin. What can be done about this? *The Clerk advised that the track will be the property of Polehanger Farms. In discussion with Polehanger it has been agreed that bollards would not protect the track and fields beyond from unwanted incursions and*

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 2021

therefore a gate and kissing gate would be installed (as at the end) once the land is transferred back to them.

- Will the installation of a gate not stop the dog bin from being emptied? *Clerk, no the waste team will have to park up and walk down to the bin to empty it.*

Standing orders were reinstated at 8.12pm

603. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 8th February 2021.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 8th February 2021 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman of this meeting (at the first opportunity). Carried

604. CLERKS REPORT AND MATTERS ARISING

- a. To request clarification on matters arising and items within the Clerks report.
 - i. The Clerk provided a brief update on issues and work undertaken since the last meeting. No questions were raised.

605. PROCEDURES

- a. To review actions arising after discussion with Village Hall Trustees on MPC Protocol for Marking the Death of a Senior National Figure.

The clerk advised that the Village Hall Trustees have raised a number of issues concerning location, cost to purchase, install and maintain, raising and lowering of flags etc. They have proposed to maintain the status quo and leave the flagpole to those with that facility already in place.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved to remove references to flag flying from MPC Protocol for Marking the Death of a Senior National Figure and approve protocol for publication. Carried

- b. To consider the implications of holding Parish Council meetings in person (rather than remote) from 7th May 2021 and any ensuing actions.

The Clerk advised that the Government is not currently planning to extend legislation beyond 7th May specifically allowing parish councils to hold their meetings remotely. Interpretation of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972 varies. Neither the 1960 nor 1972 acts prohibit virtual meetings as the internet had not been invented when these laws were written, and neither of these laws actually specifically state that a meeting has to be held in a single physical space at which all participants and any attending members of the public must be together. Online or hybrid meetings may well be lawful under the 1960 and 1972 acts if the Courts interpret words such as 'present' and 'attendance' and 'place' as having validity when they occur in a virtual/online meeting. MPC must make a local decision about how we interpret the legislation, and what our appetite for risk is.

This means that MPC need to consider:

- i. A review of the current meeting schedule.

Cllrs agreed to review this on a meeting by meeting basis but no changes were required at present

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 2021

- ii. Change date of Statutory Annual Meeting currently scheduled for 10th May to 4th, 5th or 6th May?

Cllrs agreed to hold the 10th May meeting in the Village Hall.

- iii. Review or implement a Scheme of Delegation.

Cllrs agreed to review this at the April/May meetings.

- iv. MVH requirements

Clerk to discuss with MVH

- v. Risk assessment required

Clerk and Cllr Thompson to prepare risk assessment and cover all other in person meeting issues.

- b. To consider requirements for Annual Parish Meeting on 26th April 2021

Cllrs agreed to hold the Annual Parish Meeting on 26th April as per the approved meeting schedule via Zoom and that the Clerk should publicise as normal.

606. FINANCE

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

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to approve Bank Statements and Reconciliations numbered 016 savings account and 138/139 current account, and that they be signed electronically by Cllrs Morgan and Standbridge. Carried.

- b. **Orders for the payment of money**

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that the schedule of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment and that the Clerk is authorised with the Chairman to approve any payments required prior to 31st March 2021 if they are part of the current financial year budget. Carried.

Payment requests received before agenda published			
BACSS45	ACM Business Services Ltd	Apr 20 - Mar 21 Telecoms	£192.00
BACSS46	Gravenhurst Parish Council	Zoom subscription contribution Oct 20 to Mar 21	£30.30
BACSS47	Shaw & Sons Ltd	In memoriam binder with inserts	£135.00
BACSS48	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	Allotments software	£148.80
FA01-0321	Mr P Carne	March Salary	
BACSS49	Mr L Marabese	Community Orchard Pruning	£100.00
BACSS50	Miss A Marabese	Clerks expenses reclaim	£78.29
BACSS51	Miss A Marabese	Additional March Salary	
BACSS52	HMRC	Q4 PAYE & NI Contributions	£404.11
BACSS53	Standard Life	Clerks additional pension contributions	£75.93

607. PLANNING AND HOUSING

- a. **Applications since last Council meeting for consideration**

- i. CB/21/00395/FULL - 113 High Street, SG17 5LZ - Single storey front, side and rear extension, two storey side extension and loft conversion with rear facing dormer.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Karlake. Resolved to that the Council has no objection to planning application 21/00395. Carried.

- ii. CB/TRE/21/00041 - 84 Shefford Road, SG17 5LL - Works to a tree Protected by a Tree Preservation Order MB/99/00008/T1 fell Oak Tree.

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 2021

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thomason. Resolved to that the Council objects to planning application TRE/21/00041 and that the Clerk and Planning Working group finalise the objection letter. Carried.

- iii. CB/21/00459/OUT – 100 High street, SG17 5LZ - Outline Application: Development of up to 34 dwellings and associated works following the demolition of 100 High Street with all matters reserved except access.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thomason. Resolved to that the Council objects to planning application 21/00459 and that the Clerk and Planning Working group finalise the objection letter. Carried.

- iv. CB/21/00749/FULL - 78 Fildyke Road, SG17 5LU - Loft conversion and new porch.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to that the Council has no objection to planning application 21/00749. Carried.

- v. CB/21/00785/FULL - Ansell Village Stores, SG17 5LX - Change of Use ground floor/extension - part C3 dwelling & part A1 shop, all to be A1 shop. *Comments by 30th March.*

Proposed Cllr Thomason/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to that the Council objects to planning application 21/00785 on the grounds of highways issues, noise and the adequacy of parking. 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 attendance at RAF Henlow Engagement Event for Parish Councils on Wednesday 10th March – 10:00am.

It was agreed that Cllr Thompson would attend the presentation and report back at the next meeting.

- ii. To consider attendance at Planning Inspectorate virtual hearing of appeal CB/19/02039/OUT - Land rear of 40 Shefford Road - APP/P0240/W/20/3249265, starting Tuesday 13th April at 10:00am

It was agreed that the Clerk, Cllr Karlake and Cllr Morgan would attend the hearing during the day and that Cllr Karlake would make a representation on behalf of MPC with the assistance of Cllr Thompson. Cllr Karlake will assist in publicising attendance to the hearing with residents.

- iii. To consider how to protect important trees in the village and ensuing actions. Councillors discussed the need to identify and protect important trees in the village in order avoid unnecessary felling by residents and developers. The Clerk advised that the CBC Tree Officer had suggested that if MPC provided them with a list of trees and their locations (using What 3 words) they would assess them for potential protections and TPO's.

Cllr Karlake volunteered to start on the list with Cllr Parsons reviewing those at the Shillington Road end of the village. Both to report back at the next meeting.

- iv. To consider updating MPC 'capital projects' and 'leisure strategy'.

The Clerk was asked to update this and to send to councillors for review.

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 2021

608. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

a. Report from Cllr Thomason

Cllr Thomason thanked all those in the Neighbourhood Plan steering group and the many volunteers who have helped and provided input into the Village Plan from 2008. Currently the Draft Neighbourhood Plan is undergoing the need for SEA Screening, for which the consultation period ends on 23rd March. The Draft Neighbourhood Plan has been circulated to all Parish and Ward Councillors for review and the policies are summarised at the end. The draft document does not require clarification of queries raised prior to SEA Screening or Consultation 14. Consultation 14 will take 6 weeks and will require updates to the draft plan to be considered dependent upon feedback received.

The Clerk added that she would like MPC to recognise the time and work put into the creation of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan by Cllr Thomason and the Chairman thanked all those involved with it.

b. To endorse the Draft Meppershall Neighbourhood Plan

Proposed Cllr Thomason/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to endorse the Meppershall Draft Neighbourhood Plan for Formal Regulation 14 consultation. Carried

609. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. Discussion on any highways issues if required

Cllr Seaman reported the following:

- Thanks to the Messenger for publishing a letter regarding the Road Traffic Petition sent to CBC by Mr Kevin Cadd, Ward Councillors Brown and Liddiard and residents. The response from CBC is disappointing in terms of action and timing.
- The new CBC "Fix My Street" website was used to report the non-functioning VAR/VAS sign on Shefford Road. The response was very negative. *Cllr Liddiard to follow up the matter up on our behalf.*
- An Enforcement Notice on the developers of 15 Shillington Road is still outstanding as they are awaiting the raising of a section 285 giving the developers the legal right to carry out road and pathway improvements. This has been outstanding for many months even though the development has finished and the builders departed.
- After a year there is still no action taken by CBC regarding improvements to the current highways issues and safety concerns outside the village shop.
- After at least a year no action has been taken by CBC with regards to the introduction of 40mph signage on Shefford Road from the A507 roundabout to the start of the village 30mph section.
- Subsequent to a road traffic accident where a van crashes into a hedge on the bend on Shefford Road in the last few weeks we question whether CBC Planning and Highways really did consider highways safety issues when allowing three new houses to be built with their entrance onto the most dangerous bend on Shefford Road.
- In conclusion given the total lack of action with regards to road safety issues by CBC, we ask are they indifferent or uncaring just because we are classified as a small village within a larger county?

610. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 2021

a. Centenary Field Parish Facilities – Update from Clerk and Centenary Field Working Group.

The Clerk advised that the Working Group and Croudace seem to have arrived at an agreement that has been accepted in principle. Croudace have provided the Working Group with a draft Settlement Agreement Letter, draft completion of works letter and draft transfer documents that need to be reviewed and returned with suggested amendments. A Meeting was held with Nick Ginger of Machins (MPC & MVH Solicitor) Polehanger Farms, MVH and MPC to walk through the land transfers, as transfers from Croudace to all 3 parties are required (MPC, MVH and Polehanger). The Clerk wished councillors to note that the hedge at the bottom of Centenary Field would belong to MPC and that Croudace had installed a green metal fence abutting it that is now too difficult to remove. In discussions with Polehanger Farms it was agreed that the height of the hedge would be allowed to grow above the fence so that Polehanger can cut the top for maintenance. Cllr Thompson confirmed the Clerks update and spoke about the complexities of the Bond noting that with the proposed agreement calling upon the Bond may not be in the best interests of MPC or residents. MVHT have advised that there is £10k in the Escrow account that can be used to cover the shortfall in offer from Croudace and cost of works by Sheriffs. The cost of works is to be reviewed by the Clerk and Sheriffs as soon as handover happens.

i. To approve:

1. Handover of Centenary Field to the Parish Council based upon negotiated terms.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve the handover of Centenary Field to the Parish Council based upon negotiated terms and agreement of the Working Group to documentation. Carried
2. Nick Ginger - Machins Solicitors LLP as Parish Council solicitors,
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved to confirm Nick Ginger of Machins Solicitors LLP as Parish Council solicitors. Carried
3. Commencement of remedial work on site.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the Clerk proceed with the commencement of remedial works on Centenary Field at the earliest opportunity subsequent to handover (to include purchase of padlocks for pitch etc). Carried
4. Any other issues arising.
Councillors acknowledged that this has been and is a long drawn out affair with Croudace and that unfortunately residents believe that this is an MPC issue.
It was agreed that post-handover suitable publicity would be made concerning Centenary Field.

611. HEALTH & SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

a. Community Safety – To receive report from Cllr Seaman

Cllr Seaman reported:

- The Police have reported that there have been a number of vehicle break-ins and across the county there has been an increase in the number of catalytic converters removed from vehicles. Residents are advised to 'mark-up' their vehicle CAT's.

b. Old Road Meadow – To receive and approve risk assessment

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 2021

The Chairman confirmed that he had visited site together with the Clerk and the real area for concern is an open ditch of water that has been constructed by a resident as a top up feed to their pond. Therefore the Clerk will need to clarify on whose property the ditch has been constructed.

Clerk to prepare risk assessment for review at next meeting.

- c. MPC Risk Review** – To receive and approve action reports for 2020-2021 Risk Review.
Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the 2020-2021 Risk Review and actions be approved and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried

612. PERSONNEL

- a. A motion to exclude the Press and/or the public from the meeting.**

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. It is hereby resolved that in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended that as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted at Agenda Item 612.b Namely update on actions resulting from last Personnel Committee Meeting it is advisable in the public interest that the Press and/or the Public be temporarily excluded from this meeting and they are herewith instructed to withdraw. Carried

- b. Personnel Committee Meeting 3rd March 2021** – Update to Council and agree on any actions.

Please refer to private and confidential minutes.

613. CLOSE OF THE PUBLIC MEETING

The Chairman reminded everyone that the next meeting would be the 8th March and declared the meeting closed at 22:00pm

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

Glossary

- CBC = Central Bedfordshire Council
- MPC = Meppershall Parish Council
- CCOC = Constructors Code of Conduct
- ORM = Old Read Meadow Nature Reserve
- DMC = CBC Development Management Committee (for planning applications)