

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEOLINK ON MONDAY 12TH APRIL 2021

PRESENT: **Councillors:** Chapman (in the Chair), Karlake, Merryweather, Morgan, Parsons Seaman, Standbridge and Thompson
 The Clerk: A Marabese
 Others: Ward Councillors Brown and Liddiard, and 6 members of the public
The Chairman declared the virtual meeting open at 7:45pm.

614. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Cllrs Austin and Thomason sent apologies for absence that were accepted by Council.

615. 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'.
- b. The Chairman requested that due to the passing of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh agenda item 620.c be added to review protocol and ensuing actions.
- c. The Chairman asked all attendees to observe a minutes silence in honour of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

616. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

617. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:50pm) 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:

- Due to elections for the Police and Crime Commissioner all councillors at CBC are in 'purdah'.
- Grants are still available to businesses for restarting as CBC has only issued 50% of the money available from Government for this. Form ARG3 is available on the CBC website for completion by all applicable businesses.
- A CBC consultation on the location electrical charging power points. MPC and MVH should consider whether a charging point at the village hall should be included.
- Fix My Street is working well and Ward Councillors are receiving weekly reports.
- Ward Councillors have called into DMC planning application CB/21/00459/OUT 100 High Street in the event that the Planning Officer is minded to approve the application.
- Cllr Brown will be available to attend the socially distanced one minute silence at 3:00pm in the village hall car park to honour HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Ward Councillor Liddiard advised the meeting that:

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- Six CBC controlled leisure centres have re-opened today. Visitors will experience one-way systems and limited shower and changing room facilities.
- Libraries are still offering a virtual service to users. An update is expected in the next two weeks regarding re-opening.
- Ward Councillor Grant Scheme – Each ward councillor has been allocated £2k for voluntary and community groups. Match funding is preferable and councillors are eager to support clubs and organisations getting back to their usual activities.
- Highways
 - Pleased to see that the pot hole by the Airman ph. Bridge has been fixed. Further potholes have been identified and reported.
 - Shefford Road patching has been highlighted to CBC Highways teams and a full resurfacing is to be planned post completion of developments.
 - Resurfacing of the rest of Fildkye Road is scheduled for this summer.

Questions from the public:

- Can Cllr Liddiard provide an update on repair or replacement of the vehicle activated sign (VAS) on Shefford Road? *Cllr Liddiard – Arrangements have been made for the CBC Principle Highways Officer Lisa Wright to walk the village with Cllr Liddiard and members of the MPC to highlight highways issues in April. Cllr Liddiard will also lobby to add in additional traffic calming measures to Shefford Road when re-surfacing.*
- When will the 2 raised tables on Shefford Road be installed? *Cllr Liddiard – A section 278 agreement with Bovis Homes is in place for the installation of the 2 raised tables near the entrance to their site at 32 Shefford Road. The installation will be part of this development but no dates for this have been advised at present.*

Standing orders were reinstated at 8.07pm

618. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 8th March 2021.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Karlake. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 8th March 2021 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman of this meeting (at the first opportunity). Carried

619. 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.
 - ii. 32 Shefford Road – Issues refer to site levels. Residents have reported that site has raised ground levels by circa 75cms and new homes currently under construction will now overlook Orchard Close homes. Enforcement have advised that the issue is currently with the Planning Officer Stuart Kemp to review and possibly discharge condition 2 of the planning application for 19/03611 (this required no building above slab level until site levels had been approved). Clerk has advised that had new site levels been provided during application stage MPC would have objected on the grounds of overlooking, effect of village skyline, inadequacy of boundary treatments

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etc. but now find that hand are tied with no input into this situation. Planning Officer has confirmed that he will keep the Clerk informed about his decision and has confirmed that if he is not happy with proposed site levels the developer will need to remove any buildings constructed without permission.

- iii. 84 Fildyke Road highways issues – Clerk emailed Blakeney Homes regarding blocking of the road due to roadside offloading of deliveries and continued parking of contractors on the pavements. Apologies received from the Site Manager
- iv. The Village Caretaker has been asked to address the litter at ORM and around the village hall this week.

620. PROCEDURES

- a. Update on plans to hold Parish Council meetings in person (rather than remote) from 7th May 2021 and any ensuing actions.

The Clerk advised that the Local Government Secretary, Robert Jenrick, has said the Government will support the High Court claim being brought by Lawyers in Local Government, the Association of Democratic Services Officers and Hertfordshire County Council over the ability of councils in England to hold remote meetings. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government confirmed that, in papers provided to the Court to support the claim, the Government recognised that there was “a case to be heard” that the Local Government Act 1972 should be interpreted as allowing for virtual meetings “as the legislation was passed at a time when virtual meetings could not have been envisaged”. The case will be heard by the High Court on 21 April.

Despite this planning for in person meetings after 6th May 2021 continues with the next MPC meeting on 10th May scheduled to take place in the Social Club area of the Village Hall. The Clerk and Cllr Thompson are preparing a risk assessment to cover in person COVID safe meetings.

- b. Update on planning for Annual Parish Meeting on 26th April 2021.

The Clerk reported that the agenda, papers and invitations had been sent but that she is yet to receive any written reports.

- c. Actions subsequent to the passing of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

The Clerk and Cllr Thompson provided councillors with a list of actions required and a proposal of wording for both MPC’s website and Facebook page.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Secoded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that;

- i. *changes be made to the MPC website to regarding the death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh,*
- ii. *a specific post be added to the MPC Facebook page,*
- iii. *a letter of Condolence to HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh’s Private Secretary be sent, and that,*
- iv. *a socially distanced minutes silence be organised to take place at 3:00pm on Saturday 17th April and all appropriate individuals be invited to attend. Carried.*

621. FINANCE

- a. **Tommy Figures** – To consider purchase of Tommy figures for the village

Councillors agreed that whilst they would like to see Tommy Figures installed in the village they are concerned that they would be desecrated by vandals and would therefore look for another way to recognise the Royal British Legion and those they represent.

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Proposed Cllr Seaman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved not to purchase Tommy Figures. Carried.

- b. 2020-2021 End of Year** – To review actual v budget financial summary pre Internal Audit. The Clerk presented councillors with the unaudited actual v budget summary for 2020-2021 that was reviewed by all.

Cllr Parsons left the meeting

- c. 2021-2022 Budget** – To consider amendment to 2021-2022 budget.

The Clerk presented a revised budget for 2021-2022 that included costs for projects not completed in 2020-2021 due to the delay in handover of Centenary Field.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to approve the revised 2021-2022 budget as presented with income at £176,734 and expenditure at £238,152. Carried.

- d. Corporate Governance Questionnaire** – To approve submission of the corporate governance questionnaire to our Internal Auditor.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved to approve the submission of the Corporate Governance Questionnaire to the Internal Auditor as presented. Carried.

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

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved to approve Bank Statements and Reconciliations numbered 017 savings account and 140 current account, and that they be signed electronically by Cllrs Morgan and Standbridge. Carried.

- f. Orders for the payment of money** - A schedule of payments will be distributed at the meeting for approval and authorisation.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the schedule of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment, and that invoices be signed electronically by Cllrs Morgan and Standbridge. Carried

Payments made prior to meeting date as part of 2020-21 financial year			
BACS554	Southern Regalia Ltd	Mourning rosettes	£16.50
BACS555	Chapman Planning	Neighbourhood planning consultancy for year 2020-21	£175.00
Payment requests received before agenda published			
BACS556	CPRE	Annual Membership	£36.00
BACS557	BATPC	Affiliation feed 2021/22	£417.00
BACS558	P. Carne	Expenses - allotment replacement taps	£25.70
FA01-0421	P. Carne	April Salary	

- g. Standing order approval** – To approved revised standing order payments list.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that standing orders, direct debits and salary payments be approved as submitted until 31st March 2022. Carried.

622. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration

- i. CB/21/00053/FULL – 1 Shefford Road, SG17 5LJ - Retention of existing three bedroom bungalow, demolition of the existing attached side garage. Formation of a new access road. Erection of five residential chalet bungalows (1.5 storey) and associated garages – Revised plans submitted.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 21/00053 and that the Clerk finalise the objection letter. Carried.

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- ii. CB/21/01052/FULL – 21 Brookmead, SG17 5SA - Two Storey Side Extension.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 21/01052. 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. Update on RAF Henlow Engagement Event for Parish Councils held on Wednesday 10th March by Cllr Thompson and approval of response to scoping application CB/21/00910/SCO.

Cllr Thompson provided councillors with a report on the Engagement Event and confirmed that with the Clerk they had submitted a letter to the Planning Officer reviewing the Scoping Documents. Key issues discussed during the event were:

- The Draft masterplan for the site (Homes England were keen to reiterate that the development only applied to the areas on either side of Hitchin Road and did NOT include the airfield runway areas beyond the hangers and abutting the A507)
- The current road infrastructure and its inability to potentially cope with the construction of up to 1000 dwellings on the site
- Listed buildings on the site along with existing infrastructure (roads on the base) would be incorporated into the development plan
- Green spaces currently located on the site would be utilised in the creation of Public Open spaces where possible and augmented to enhance the size and location of these areas across the development.
- The limitations imposed on dwelling construction on the site in proximity to MBDA Systems and the possibility of those areas being used for employment use
- The locations of possible schools (New and to augment Derwent Academy), along with possible locations for a community hub and local shops
- The potential to subsequently develop the airfield area of the plot could result in upwards of 2,000 more homes to be added to the site of 1,000 homes.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved to that the Council support the objections and comments raised regarding 21/00910/SCO. Carried.

- ii. Update on 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.

Cllr Karslake, The Clerk and Cllr Thompson to attend with Cllr Karslake having prepared a speech on behalf of MPC.

- iii. To consider and agree on response to Local Plan Proposed Main Modifications Consultation - March 2021

Councillors agreed that they would not respond to this most recent consultation as it changed nothing for Meppershall.

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

The Clerk was asked to update this and to send to councillors for review at the next meeting.

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623. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

a. Report from Cllr Thomason

The Clerk reported that CBC had confirmed completion of SEA screening with no issues identified. The Steering Group is now able to progress to public consultation. .

624. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. Stopping up of the Highway – To consider request from Department for Transport proposed stopping up of highway at land opposite 34 – 42 Shefford Road, SG17 5LN. *Proposed Cllr Morgan/Secoded Cllr Chapman. Resolved to object to the stopping up of highway at land opposite 34-42 Shefford Road, SG17 5LN. Carried.*

The Clerk was also asked to make a Freedom of Information request to CBC for information on the number of road closures and works in Meppershall over the last 18 months.

b. East West Rail (EWR) Consultation – To consider response to on proposals for the new railway between Bletchley and Cambridge, via Bedford.

Cllr Thompson presented a report on the issues within the consultation to councillors and they agreed that no response was required from MPC.

c. Update and discussion on highways issues and any actions ensuing

Cllr Seaman reported the following:

- There has been no progress by CBC Highways on the progress of speed reduction measures in Meppershall since presentation to the Traffic Management Committee of the petition. We expect to see progress ASAP.

625. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Grass Cutting – To consider award of grass cutting contract subsequent to VGS terminating contract.

Village Garden Services advised on 22nd March that they were terminating the grass cutting contract with MPC due to staffing issues. The Clerk contacted companies who had previously quoted for the MPC grass cutting contract asking them to re-tender. 3 contractors provided up to date quotations and details were provided to councillors with a recommendation to award the contract for 12 months to Contractor B.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Secoded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to award grass cutting up to March 2022 to Contractor B. Carried.

Subsequent to the resolution the Clerk advised that contractor B was A & B Gardening Ltd. The Clerk also advised that she had received a complaint from a resident living in Marywells about the state of the verges to which a response would be sent after the meeting.

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

i. To consider actions specific to:

1. Handover of Centenary Field to the Parish Council based upon negotiated terms, The Clerk reported that on 12th March, on behalf of MPC and MVH, the working group asked that Mr G Jones (in his capacity as a lawyer) review the settlement agreement for the land behind the village hall and email Croudace the revised settlement agreement letter as amended by both our organisations. Mr Jones chased Croudace on 22nd March for a response. A response was received but

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Croudace now want the settlement agreement to include all outstanding remedial works for the village hall. These remedial works / snagging items for the village hall have never been a point of discussion between the MPC Centenary Field Working Group and Croudace. All discussions have focussed solely on the land behind and to the side of the village hall. The Working Group has asked that the Village Hall Trustees respond to this latest correspondence, however we fear that this issue will now delay handover of land to MPC.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that the Clerk write to Croudace and:

- *Express disappointment in receiving the emailed correspondence and attachments dated 23rd March 2021 in reply to that sent by Mr G Jones dated 22nd March 2020 on our behalf.*
- *Confirm that we find that the email and draft Settlement Agreement from 23rd March clearly 'moves the goalposts' with regards to the handover of Parish lands that MPC have been communicating with Croudace over since our meeting in September 2020.*
- *Raise concerns that as Croudace wish only to settle with the MPC concurrently with settling outstanding issues with Meppershall Village Hall Trustees (MVHT), this has the potential to impact on works to be carried out on Centenary Field, their costs and the provision of recreational amenities to our residents that is now well-overdue.*
- *Urge Croudace to resolve outstanding issues with MVHT urgently or if that is not possible within the next two weeks to deal with settlement of the agreed MPC position separately, as was intended.*
- *Stress how eager our residents are eager to use their facilities.*

Furthermore that an appropriate communication to residents be added to the MPC Facebook page. Carried.

2. Commencement of remedial work on site.

No progress due to handover delays

3. Any other issues arising.

None

c. Identification of important trees in the village for potential protection – Update from Cllrs Karslake and Parsons.

Cllr Karslake reported that he had walked some of the village but had found little evidence of trees worthy of a potential TPO other than those abutting Walnut Tree Way and near the bakery. Further updates to be provided at the next meeting.

d. Great British Spring Clean – To consider participation in event from 28th May to 13th June and any ensuing actions.

Councillors agreed that we would not participate in the event this May to June. However the Clerk was asked to discuss with the Messenger an article encouraging individuals to participate in the Great British Spring Clean #MillionMileMission

e. Allotments – To consider request to install a soakaway on allotment land for neighbouring property.

The Clerk advised that this request has been withdrawn.

f. To review MPC 'capital projects' and 'leisure strategy'.

See Item 622.b.iv

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626. HEALTH & SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

a. Community Safety – To receive report from Cllr Seaman

Cllr Seaman reported:

- There has been an increase in vandalism in the village and Police presence is less likely.

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

Clerk to prepare risk assessment for review at next meeting.

c. COVID Safe Meetings – To receive and approve risk assessment.

Clerk to prepare risk assessment for review at next meeting.

d. PC Stores – To consider actions subsequent to damage to the PC Stores by youths on 3rd April 2021.

The Clerk reported that damage to the roofing of the PC Stores had occurred overnight on 3rd April. The Clerk was called to site on Easter Sunday and Cllr Thompson assisted with the clean-up and review of damage. The top coat of roofing felt to the side of the storage containers will need to be replaced. Incident reported to Police. PCSO's advised. *Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that the Clerk arrange for the purchase and installation of replacement roofing. Carried.*

Councillors discussed the continued issues of vandalism and the cost to village organisations. Councillor Liddiard was asked to contact the CBC Community Safety team and the Clerk was asked to arrange for the publication of social media and Messenger articles on the cost and implications of vandalism in the village

627. PERSONNEL

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

Proposed Cllr Thompson/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 627.b Namely to approve Community and Environment Officer Job and Person Descriptions, 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. Job and Person Descriptions – To approve Community and Environment Officer Job and Person Descriptions.

Please refer to private and confidential minutes.

628. CLOSE OF THE PUBLIC MEETING

The Chairman reminded everyone that the next meeting would be the 10th May in the Village Hall 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
- MVH = Meppershall Village Hall
- ORM = Old Read Meadow Nature Reserve
- DMC = CBC Development Management Committee (for planning applications)