

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A STATUTORY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 12TH JULY 2021

PRESENT: **Councillors:** Thompson (Chair), Chapman, Crossley, Merryweather, Morgan, Parsons, Seaman and Standbridge.

The Clerk: A Marabese.

Others: Ward Councillor Liddiard, and 3 members of the public.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:58pm.

660. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Councillor Brown provided apologies that were accepted.

661. CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded all those present at the meeting of the COVID-safe meeting guidelines. The Clerk then advised meeting attendees of the need to adhere to social distancing, not to share meeting documents, to make use of the hand sanitiser available, to keep masks on at all times, follow signage instructions and to remember to wipe down their table and chair with antibacterial wipes provided prior to leaving.

662. MEMBERS INTERESTS

- a. To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda and requests for dispensation.

None received or requested.

663. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (8:00pm) 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:

- Bedfordshire's Chief Fire Officer, Paul Fuller, had passed away. Mr Fuller had worked for the authority since 2002 and was highly regarded in his role. His deputy is covering the role at present and service delivery is unchanged.
- COVID cases in Central Bedfordshire are rising and the number of PCR tests is also increasing. Everyone must be mindful and remain aware of current issues with the spread of the Delta variant. Services are becoming overstretched due to the isolation of staff. Street cleaning and waste collection are being service priorities. Grass cutting is behind but CBC contractors are trying to catch up. Despite the ending of furlough and redundancies, recruitment is proving to be difficult especially for HGV drivers which has a knock on effect with CBC contractors such as Ringway Jacobs. Some staff when possible are working 18 hour shifts.
- All CBC libraries are now open.
- CBC has taken the decision that there will be no changes to the opening of council offices at present. It is likely that CBC will reduce the number of offices across CBC which will provide a saving to tax payers. Priory House will not close.
- CBC's 5yr housing supply is currently at 6.27 years as of the 1st April 2021. This is an important figure as in Planning Inspector Inquiries the tilted balance is now in favour of CBC and not developers.

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- The Local Plan has now passed from the Planning Inspectorate to the Housing Minister for signing off. As a knock on effect from the last questions raised by the Planning Inspectors, the DIO is now carrying out more research into the re-development of RAF Henlow.
- Regarding pooling water and flooding outside 55A-55C High Street, the CBC Highways Officer has advised that the area will be reviewed when appropriate weather conditions occur.

The following questions were raised by members of the public:

- Can s106 monies not be used to cover the cost of traffic calming in the village? *ML – s106 money from developers is allocated to specific funds and cannot be diverted from one funding pot to another. Meppershall has s106 funds (in the form of 2 raised tables yet to be installed) from the Bovis, 32 Shefford Road site. Unfortunately the Planning Inspector at the time of the inquiry removed s106 funds for highways improvements from the Stocken House, 59 Shefford Road Unilateral Undertaking.*
- Please confirm closure dates for Shefford Road and will pedestrian access still be permitted? *Clerk - Shefford Road will be closed from 19th to 21st July for resurfacing and then from 22nd July to 3rd September for installation of a new storm fallout. Rectory Road will be closed from 22nd to 24th September for BT to carry out works.*
Action: The Clerk was asked to add to Facebook details of proposed road closures.
- Is it possible to have a 'no construction traffic sign' at the entrance to Fildyke Road? *ML will request this.*
- Will The Pigling planning application be discussed this evening? *Clerk – No, planning application details arrived after issuing the agenda.*

Standing orders were reinstated at 8.25pm

664. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 14th June 2021.
Proposed Cllr Morgan/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 14th June 2021 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.

665. 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 including:
 1. Meeting of Environment and Leisure Group on 5th July to discuss ORM play area re-development, tree planting in ORM and tree planting at Centenary Field.
 2. Notification from Shefford Town Clerk of new appointments.
Action: Clerk to send letter of congratulations to the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Shefford.
 3. Notification of two planning applications after issuing current agenda, namely CB/21/03056/RM - The Mow, SG17 5LP - Reserved Matters: following Outline Application CB/20/02860/OUT (Outline: Demolition of one dwelling & erection of 13 dwellings and ancillary works.) Reserved matters for Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale relating to conditions 2, 3, 4 and 9 and CB/21/02885/FULL - The Pigling, SG17 5LL - Replace existing mobile home with a single storey two bedroom

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permanent dwelling. Both have a deadline date for responses prior to the next MPC September meeting.

666. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. **Co-Option** – To consider any councillor co-option requests received.

The Clerk advised that she had received an expression of interest in co-option that had been circulated to all councillors for consideration. Councillors welcomed the application but as the applicant was not present at the meeting suggesting deferring a decision until the September meeting.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved defer decision on co-option until MPC meeting in September and Clerk to inform applicant. Carried.

b. **Policies** – To approve MPC Website Policies and Statements v1.0.

Proposed Cllr Standbridge/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to approve MPC Website Policies and Statements. Carried.

c. **Website** – Cllr Standbridge to provide an update on the new website.

Cllr Standbridge and the Clerk have continued to meet to update the new website. The new Meppershall site is not yet live as we have been waiting for QBIC to respond to an enquiry regarding uptime, PHP versions & backups, which they've only just answered and fixed. As QBIC have now responded to queries raised and MPC have approved the MPC Website Policies and Statements Cllr Standbridge will make the new site live this coming week.

The Clerk wished to thank Cllr Parsons for his street naming article.

The Messenger will be publicising the new website in their August / September edition for which Cllr Standbridge will provide an article and front cover picture.

d. **Meppershall.org email addresses** – Use and management of Meppershall.org email addresses.

The Chairman referred to an article circulated by the Clerk earlier this month regarding the use of private email address by Government officials and ministers and that similar issues concerning transparency, data protection and freedom of information applied to parish councillors and the parish council as an organisations. As we emerge from lockdown councillors who are currently using private email addresses for parish council communication will be assisted by the Clerk and Cllr Standbridge in set up and use of their Meppershall.org emails.

Councillors also discussed how best in future to tag emails as official, sensitive etc.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr chapman. Resolved to add to emails information security definitions as follows:

- *OFFICIAL – Loss could cause some damage to the Council*
- *OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE – Loss could cause severe damage to the Council*
- *UNCLASSIFIED – Loss would cause little or no damage to the Council*

And to update relevant policies as necessary. Carried.

e. **Consultation** – To consider a response to the Boundary Commission for England consultation on proposed constituency change for Meppershall to Hitchin constituency from Mid Bedfordshire.

The Boundary Commission for England is consulting on revised constituency areas that would see Meppershall move from Mid Bedfordshire CC to Hitchin CC

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Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to object to the constituency proposal on the grounds that Meppershall and the surrounding area is a rural community whereas Hitchin is an urban town and therefore linking the two is not in the best interests of residents as it would changing representation from a rural to urban focus. Also the proposed constituency crosses county borders which raises further concerns for residents. Carried.

- f. Centenary Field Parish Facilities** – Update from Clerk and Centenary Field Working Group on handover of Centenary Field to the Parish Council based upon negotiated terms. Our solicitors had been asked on behalf of MVHT and MPC to review the draft settlement agreement and consider/advise as to the appropriate amendments required to safeguard our respective positions. The working group met with Mr Ginger of Machins on 5th July and a response was sent to Croudace from Mr Ginger to confirm that Croudace should retain structural responsibility for large scale defects that may arise over a £ value. A response from Croudace is now pending.

- g. Stocken House Green Space** – Update from Clerk and Cllr Thompson.

The Clerk and Cllr Thompson met on 5th July to review documents forwarded by Davidsons; a draft management agreement, transfer and other documents concerning the open green space. A detailed review of the documents has identified the following issues of concern:

- Watering of trees and plants required under MPC management
- Litter disposal
- Arborial inspection prior to acceptance
- Qualified ROSPA inspections every 6 weeks
- Land drainage responsibility – above or below ground
- Potential land drainage rates
- Works to trees in future to be approved by Ecologist to safeguard bat habitat
- Replacement planting up to Year 5 which is after proposed handover
- Year 10 review and management plan with CBC
- Phased handover as opposed to handover after completion of whole site.

The Clerk is still awaiting feedback from CBC Planning Officer Benjamin Tracey.

Action: Cllr Liddiard was asked to arrange a meeting with the Clerk, Cllr Thompson and Mr B Tracey to discuss CBC requirements on the area in question.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to review MPC decision on adoption of Stocken House Green Space at MPC September meeting after receiving proposal from the Clerk and Cllr Thompson. Carried.

- h. Delegation of powers** – To consider delegation of powers to the Clerk to deal with matters arising over the summer months until the next MPC meeting in September. *Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved delegate powers to Clerk to make decisions on planning applications, payments and all other matters that cannot wait until the 13th September MPC meeting after consulting with the relevant working group or committee members. Carried.*

667. FINANCE

- a. Carbonite Purchase** – To approve cost of circa £140 (\$192) to renew Carbonite back-up software for 2 years. Expires 25th July 2021.

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Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to approve purchase of 3 year contract with Carbonite. Carried.

b. Grants – To consider donation to MAGPAS.

Deferred to September meeting.

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

The Clerk could not present any back statements or reconciliations for approval as posted bank statement had arrived too late.

d. Orders for the payment of money - A schedule of payments was distributed at the meeting for approval and authorisation.

Payments presented for payment were checked by Cllrs Chapman and Parsons.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved that the schedule of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment by Cllrs Thompson or Parsons. Carried.

Payment No:	Payee	Purpose	Amount
Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc			
DD01-2106	Standard Life	Clerk June Pension (15/06/21)	£71.44
DD01-2106B	Standard Life	Clerk April - June Pension underpayment	£81.81
SO01-2107	K Crofts	July Salary (payable 9/7/21)	
Payment requests received before agenda published			
BACS571	P Carne	Expenses - Strimmer Fuel	£6.50
FA01-2107	P Carne	July Salary (payable 15/07/21)	
SO02-2107	A Marabese	July Salary (payable 15/07/21)	
BACS570	A&B Gardening Ltd	June Grass Cuts	£2,158.86

668. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration

- i. CB/21/02300/FULL - Polehanger Farm, SG17 5LH - Erection of an agricultural storage shed.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Council has no objections to planning application 21/02300. Carried.

- ii. CB/21/02083/FULL - 11 Fowlers Drive, SG17 5NJ - Garage move of 1 mtr away from the boundary.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council has no objections to planning application 21/02083. Carried.

- iii. CB/21/02471/FULL - Bandland Nurseries Bungalow and land East of Shefford Road Meppershall - Erection of 8 dwellings to include all associated ancillary works following the demolition of existing bungalow.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 21/02471 and that the Clerk in conjunction with the Planning working group submit the response. Carried.

- iv. CB/21/02516/FULL - 43 Walnut Tree Way, SG17 5AB - Retrospective Change of use: Extension of rear garden boundary from unmaintained agricultural land to domestic garden.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council has no objections to planning application 21/02516. Carried.

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- v. CB/21/02897/FULL - Fowlers Farm, SG17 5LX - Variation of the design to the garage so that it no longer shares a party wall with the neighbouring garage.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council has no objections to planning application 21/02897. Carried.
- vi. CB/21/02838/FULL - 84 Shefford Road, SG17 5LL - Erection of single storey rear extension.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council has no objections to planning application 21/02838. Carried.
- vii. 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 (Revised Design and Access Statement, Sketch Layout, Site Access Plans).
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 21/00459. 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.

669. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

a. Report from the Clerk

The Clerk had little to report but will need to set time aside specifically to complete work on the Neighbourhood Plan.

670. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. Update from Clerk and Cllr Seaman

The Clerk had already provided an update on road closures in Meppershall. Regarding speed of traffic on Chapel Road and also the lack of signage indicating walkers on the road, the Clerk contacted Lisa Wright in CBC Highways on 7th June to ask if there is anything that could be done to a) reduce speed of traffic and b) warn of pedestrians in the road. Response confirmed that adjustments to speed limits have to be justified with fact-based information including speed data and a documented collision history over a 3 year period. Where there is neither a demonstrated speeding issue nor collision history, such locations are unlikely to be progressed. Where speed limit changes are supported with fact-based information, a statutory consultation and a Traffic Regulation Order are required, which requires the full support of the Police and can be a lengthy process. CBC Highways will consider the issues raised and will carry out a speed survey on Chapel Road and an initial assessment. An update will be provided once CBC have completed their assessment. The Clerk also reported on Hoo Road Bridleway flooding due to backwash from drains and sewers. CBC have been in contact with Anglian Water who have CCTV'd the sewer along Hoo Road and up to the inlet of the pumping station. They found a significant amount of debris in the sewer line including lumps of concrete, some drain rods and a large amount of unflushables. These have now been removed, and the sewer has been restored back up to full capacity. This should reduce the risk of future flooding. Anglian Water are also looking to see if any improvements can be made to the pumping station to pass forward more flow especially in periods of heavy rain. CBC have requested

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a site visit with Anglian Water to further their own investigation of the flooding (including of the ditch network) and will keep us updated.

The Clerk also mentioned mud on Shefford Road from the Stocken House development to the village entrance. *The Clerk was asked to contact Davidsons for resolution but if none was forthcoming to contact CBC Enforcement.*

Cllr Seaman raised again the issue of pending highways improvements by the 15 Shillington Road developers. Cllr Liddiard confirmed that enforcement were dealing with the footway installation, replacement VAS and road markings.

b. PCC Grant Fund Application – To consider response to the PCC Grant Fund Application proposals.

The Clerk reported that the OPCC advised on Wednesday 30th June that they had awarded MPC a £20k grant subsequent to the application submitted by Cllr. Seaman (total of £89k awarded). The Clerk and Cllr Thompson reviewed documentation provided with the outcome letter on 5th July;

- Acceptance of grant form (to be signed and returned by 16th July),
- Grant Agreement (to be signed and returned by 16th July). The grant must be used during the funding period that ends on 31st March 2022 and is to be accrued (receipt of goods rather than invoiced). Underspends cannot be carried forward to the following year unless agreed by PCC,
- Monthly Monitoring Form (requires monthly submissions by 10th of each month, quarterly due in July, October, January and April, half yearly due in October),
- Final evaluation Form (to be submitted by 10th April 2022).

The Clerk and Cllr Thompson have contacted various VAS suppliers for quotations (as it was felt that these are the only traffic measures that could be installed in the time frame) and have spoken to CBC Highways Officer Lisa Wright regarding potential highways projects and VAS positions in the village. It was suggested that returning unspent funds to the OPCC would not be appropriate. Lisa Wright has advised that CBC has a VAS policy that it would need to be followed and that we would need to collaborate with CBC on installation (use their preferred supplier TRUVELO) if CBC permitted VAS installation post speed monitoring that would have to take place after September 2021. A map of potential VAS locations is to be provided to her for review.

The Clerk discussed the issue with Cllr Liddiard on 06/07 and he will discuss with various Highways officers in a bid to ensure that the money is used to fund either VAS installation and/or a build out on Shefford Road.

Cllr Liddiard added that Cllr Dalgarno the Highways Portfolio holder is currently unwell however it would be prudent to contact his deputy, Cllr Ian Bond and the CBC CEO to request CBC assistance in ensuring the delivery of highways projects in Meppershall within OPCC timescales. He also advised that he would be meeting with the new PCC later this week and would request an extension to the funding deadline.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Clerk signs and returns the OPCC Grant Agreement and Acceptance of Grant form, requests a 12 month extension to the funding deadline and that the Chairman writes to the CBC CEO requesting assistance in ensuring funds can be spent within the deadlines. Carried.

The Chairman then reminded all councillors that any future grant applications must be made only after Council approval via resolution in line with standing orders and legislation.

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671. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Centenary Field

- i. Update from Clerk on site works.

None completed.

- ii. To consider hire of Centenary Field (not pitch).

The Clerk reported that Meppershall Social Club wish to use Centenary Field for a Family Day on 29th August to include stalls, picnic areas, bouncy castle, demonstrations etc. They advise that they should not need to go beyond the current perimeter of open grassed area between the back of the hall and current Heras fencing boundary blocking off centenary field. They hope to site a bouncy castle on the flat grassed area between side of hall & PC Store. Site a few stalls round the rear of the building on grassed area between the paths & MVH & use the banked area the other side of the path up-to the fencing for picnickers etc., where we plan to have a family entertainer performing in the open.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the Council offers the Meppershall Social Club alternative land to use e.g.: Cemetery area for their Family Day on 29th August and that the Clerk is delegated to create a Centenary Field Hire Agreement for future use. Carried.

- iii. To consider hire of Centenary Field pitch and approval of terms and conditions of pitch hire.

The Clerk reported that she has been approached by a men's Saturday league team currently using a pitch in Clifton for use of the Meppershall pitch and potentially use of the changing rooms and social club. Councillors discussed works required to the pitch and when it may be made available to teams.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the Clerk engage with the team on the understanding that the pitch may not be ready for use until at least spring 2022. Carried.

- iv. To consider 'Phillip' tree and bench.

See item 671.b.iii below.

b. Old Road Meadow

- i. To consider completing ditch fencing works by MPC team.

The Clerk advised that quotes received to date were in the region of £1.7k which seems expensive for the work required. Cllr Thompson suggested that he, the Clerk and the Greenspace Officer could complete the works themselves at a lower price.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the Clerk progress installation of ditch fencing at ORM at a cost of £800. Carried.

- ii. To consider revised layout of ORM play area.

The Clerk reported that the Environment and Leisure working group had met on 5th July to discuss the play area at ORM and its potential redevelopment.

Action: Clerk to present fully costed proposal for a re-developed play area at ORM in September.

- iii. To consider 'Elizabeth' tree and bench.

Councillors were in agreement regarding planting of special trees at ORM and Centenary Field in honour of HM The Queen and the late Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

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Action: Clerk was asked to include Elizabeth and Philip trees and benches with tree planting plans for the September meeting.

c. Update from the Clerk on tree planting plans

The Clerk reported that tree planting plans were discussed at the Environment and Leisure working group meeting and that a resident was advising on potential new trees for planting. Once the 'shopping list' is complete costs will be presented to Council.

d. Identification of important trees in the village for potential protection – Update from Cllr Parsons and the Clerk.

A local resident is currently heling with this and will report back to the Clerk with information.

e. Village benches – To approve repair and maintenance required to benches

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Secoded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the Council delegate powers to the Clerk to assess and organise remedial work required to village benches. Carried.

f. HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee – To consider participation in HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee events.

Deferred to September meeting.

672. HEALTH & SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

a. Community Safety – To receive report from Cllr Seaman and the Clerk

Cllr Seaman attended a virtual Cyber Crime meeting today and will be providing an article for publication in the next Messenger.

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

Deferred to September meeting.

673. CLOSE OF THE PUBLIC MEETING

The Chairman reminded everyone to clean their table and chair with the antibacterial wipes provided and that the next meeting would be the 13th September post lockdown in the Village Hall and declared the meeting closed at 10:45pm.

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 & MVHT = Meppershall Village Hall Trustees
- ORM = Old Read Meadow Nature Reserve
- VAS = Vehicle activated sign