

MEPPERSHALL PARISH

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD AT MEPPERSHALL VILLAGE HALL ON MONDAY 25TH APRIL 2022

PRESENT: **Chairman:** John Thompson
 Clerk: A Marabese
 Others: 11 members of the public.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:30pm.

1. WELCOME

The Chairman thanked all those present for attending the meeting and reminded attendees that this was not a Parish Council meeting but a meeting of registered electors (including councillors who are registered electors). The purpose of the meetings is to enable the registered electors to discuss parish affairs and to pass resolutions thereon. This meeting is also an opportunity for the Parish Council (and higher tiers of local government) and community group leaders to explain their activities over the last year. Anyone may attend but only registered electors in the parish may speak and vote. Any registered elector may ask questions of the Council. These will usually be answered by the Chairman or by the Parish Clerk or a designated Councillor. An elector may also make suggestions and comment on parish issues and propose resolutions. Resolutions relating to allotments are legally binding but all others are persuasive only, but will be considered by the Parish Council at their subsequent meetings.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Standbridge and the Meppershall Pre-School.

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS PARISH MEETING HELD ON 26TH APRIL 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th April 2021 were reviewed.

Proposed Mrs. C Foster / Seconded Cllr. P Chapman. Resolved to approved and adopt the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 26th April 2021. Carried.

The Chairman was asked to sign them as a true record of proceedings.

4. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL – Cllr John Thompson

As my first year as Chairman of Meppershall Parish Council comes to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor Cllr. Peter Chapman for his many years of service to Meppershall Parish Council and in particular his last six years as Chairman.

During the last 12 months the Parish Council has continued to be impacted upon by the COVID pandemic with legislation preventing Council meetings to take place in the normal open public forum until February of this year. Despite this, your Council has continued to work for the Parishioners of Meppershall.

Planning – Planning continues to present issues for the Parish Council. This past year we have worked hard on responding to planning applications and dealing with current site and development issues. At the same time, we have acquired greater understanding of planning matters and endeavoured to build on our relationships with developers working in the village as well as officers at Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC).

With the delivery of the Local Plan for Central Bedfordshire Council, Meppershall Parish Council has greater knowledge of how best to appropriately respond to planning

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applications and ensure we better monitor current developers' compliance with those requirements contained in The Plan.

Our own Neighbourhood Plan progresses with our initial Regulation 14 Consultation having taken place, and during 2022 our plan will progress to what we hope will be a successful referendum that will result in adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan. This will give us strong arguments to use against future planning applications, particularly those from speculative builders looking to bring large-scale developments to our village.

Members of the Council and local organisations participated in the Planning Inspectorate hearing for 40 Shefford Road where the developer had appealed CBC's decision not to grant planning for 103 homes. We were delighted to hear that the appeal was dismissed and the potential development stopped. However, we can expect further applications for the same site and others in the village this year as developers look to further burden our village with even more development.

The Parish Council has engaged with current developers working in Meppershall in order to facilitate positive outcomes for the village. Negotiations with Davidson Homes have progressed well and the Council hopes to sign an agreement which will see the ownership of circa 5 acres of green space handed over to the Council to manage in perpetuity for the village, along with a fully specified children's play area in the North Eastern part of the open space.

Procedures, Consultations & Legal - During the year we had three councillor resignations and I would like to take the opportunity to thank Mark Thomason, Anthony Seaman and Ashely Austin for all their efforts whilst serving as councillors. At the same time we have co-opted four new councillors and at present have no vacancies.

During the past twelve months your Clerk has worked tirelessly to ensure that current procedural and process documentation has been developed and reviewed by Council and with the help of Cllr Lucy Standbridge this has culminated in a revamp and launch of our new Parish Council Website. If you have not already viewed it please do - www.meppershall-pc.gov.uk

Finance – The precept was increased for the financial year starting in April 2022 minimally by £1.22 which has resulted in a contribution of £62.55 per annum from a Band D property.

The Council supported the purchase and donation of a variety of items for the Village Hall and made grant donations to The Meppershall Messenger, MAGPAS and The Meppershall Wanderbus.

In November the Parish Council received a financial settlement from Croudace Ltd. in respect to Centenary Field.

Environment and Leisure – The Parish Council has finally taken control of Centenary Field and most areas are now open to those who wish to use them. The Council has engaged

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specialist contractors to make good the list of issues which we now have to deal with following the settlement with Croudace Ltd. You may have seen that initial works behind the Village Hall have already begun and it is hoped that works to install new drainage and deal with landscaping issues will commence next month. The Sports Pitch will be subject to significant remedial works, and so will remain closed until that work is completed later in the year.

Your Council have plans in place to extend the current provision of Children's Play Equipment and add a purpose built adult gym on Centenary Field, along with the installation of a track around the outside of the Sport Pitch. In addition to this, Council plan to extend the children's play equipment provision at Old Road Meadow and create an improved football facility adjacent to it. Old Road Meadow Nature Reserve will be subject to improvement, including works to improve the Orchard and create wild flower areas. All this along with the planting of trees to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee year on both Centenary Field and Old Road Meadow.

I am delighted to welcome Mrs. Viv Thorne to The Parish Council who joins us as the Community and Environment Officer and already Viv has been making an impact around the village in a number of areas. Welcome Viv.

My thanks go to Mr Paul Carne and Mr. Kevin Crofts who previously worked for the Parish Council.

Highways – On a positive note Fildyke Road was resurfaced from number 84 to the junction with Chapel Road. On the flip side, the state of some of our roads and in particular Shefford Road is awful, but we have been assured by CBC that Shefford Road will receive the same treatment as Fildyke Road once major site developments on Shefford Road have been completed. We have also been blighted repeatedly by road closures, many due to works required for developments in the village.

The Parish Council was successful in obtaining a substantial grant from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and after months of discussion and subsequent to traffic monitoring CBC have agreed to install a vehicle activated sign and other road improvements at the entrance to the village on Shefford Road. We have also submitted two rural match funding applications to further enhance the works at the Shefford Road entrance to the village and await to see if we have been successful.

Anti-social Behaviour – We had hoped that the issue with nuisance youths and the anti-social behaviour caused by them had gone away however in the last few weeks issues have resurfaced with damage caused to council property near the village hall again and allotment holders being disturbed by unruly youths entering the allotments. We can only hope that parents are aware of their children's behaviour and help to ensure we maintain a village where the property of others is respected. Obviously we continue to work with Beds Police and CBC Community Safety Officers on these issues.

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Neighbourhood Plan – A great deal of work has gone into the Neighbourhood Plan by the Steering Group lead by The Clerk and Mr Andrew Pain. This team should be thanked for all their hard work as they have put together a vision for how the village should look in the future.

The Future – The Parish Council has an ambitious list of improvements planned to Parish Council owned green spaces over the coming 12 months in addition to the ‘normal’ work of the Council. If anyone would like to become more involved with some of the Councils work as a volunteer please do contact us as you will be warmly welcomed.

5. WARD COUNCILLORS REPORTS

None

6. REPORTS FROM OTHER GROUPS AND ASSOCIATIONS

a. Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) – Mr John English

Good evening, and thank you for giving CPRE the opportunity to address you this evening. My name is John English and I am a Trustee and a Planning Volunteer with the role of leading the Central Bedfordshire Planning Team.

CPRE Bedfordshire have a team of nine planning volunteers covering the County of which five are deployed in Central Bedfordshire. We are supported by two part-time staff located in our Bedford Office, Lois Director of CPRE Bedfordshire and Shelley our Digital Marketing Officer.

We are an independent charity but affiliated with the nation charity, CPRE. This combination of local knowledge and national influence makes us very effective. Our mission is to enhance, promote and protect the Bedfordshire countryside, and the ability of local communities to enjoy and value the natural world. To achieve our mission, we work with a range of organisations and communities in Bedfordshire.

OUR ROLE - CPRE Bedfordshire aims to empower and work in partnership with communities to help shape their neighbourhoods wherever we can. We work with local parishes and community groups to offer advice and guidance on a wide range of planning issues. We are not a substitute for Local Action Groups, instead we support residents with setting up and running their own campaigns and groups in their own name for or against a planning applications. On occasions we embed ourselves within a LAG at the invitation of residents i.e.; Greenwood and Flitwick Campaigns. We also respond to consultations on big infrastructure projects such as the Ox-Cam Arc, East West Rail, and London Luton Airport expansion.

We provide clear, understandable information in our targeted briefing papers to parish and town councils on major projects and make the communities affected by these projects aware of the implications and how they can respond. Our skilled team provide guidance on campaigning and engagement and help raise awareness of campaigns through a range of marketing channels.

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Our planning team is made up of volunteers who have a broad knowledge of local issues and planning. In 2021 we dedicated over 3,000 hours to supporting local communities including Meppershall. In 2021 we worked on several planning applications in the parish and provided support when requested.

We know that the countryside and urban greenspaces are important for people's wellbeing, especially in the current situation, and loss of these can have a detrimental impact on communities and individuals. Large developments can put pressure on local infrastructure and services and change the culture of rural communities. With our support, the local community can work to maintain these precious aspects of rural life that benefit all.

Your recent grant will support our team of planning volunteers to continue working with communities such as Meppershall to ensure that the community and parish council are aware of any planning issues and have good advice and guidance on how best to respond to these. With continued pressure on our countryside, we want to:

- Develop and support our Planning Team (all volunteers) so we can take on more work and broaden our skills base.
- Develop a panel of experts to advise on areas such as biodiversity, water, renewable energy, farming and food.
- Launch a new campaign to monitor the Local Plan to ensure it is adhered to. We will also be making our voice heard at the Local Plan Review in early 2022 and providing advice to parishes and the community on how to respond to the review
- Continue to campaign against developments on the Green Belt and AONB such as Greenwoods which impacts Barton, Gravenhurst and Shillington.
- Offer workshops on planning, and other topics such as developing and maintaining wild flower meadows.

We do not make a charge for our planning advice and guidance but as a charity, we are dependent on individual support and other sources of income such as grants to fund our work. As a campaigning group we do not always fit comfortably in the criteria set by some grant making organisations so fundraising can be a challenge. Like all charities our income has also been affected by the pandemic but at the same time our workload has increased as developers have taken advantage of the situation. In addition, communities now appreciate the value of the countryside on their doorstep and want to protect it now, more than ever before.

We have worked in your community recently and will continue to offer our support when you need it. Thank you one again for your financial support.

b. Meppershall Messenger – Report read by the Clerk

Summary - Our village magazine continued to publish a monthly edition throughout lockdown when an online format was used and the usual printing, collation and distribution processes could not take place because of lockdown restrictions. The printed version returned in October 2021 but the lessons learned during lockdown have

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confirmed the ongoing need for a full online version alongside it. Volume 37 of the magazine spanned the period from April 2021 to March 2022 – 10 issues including a two-month edition in the summer and at Christmas. The magazine typically comprises 32 or 36 pages, plus advertising pages.

The Meppershall Messenger has linked with other organisations in the village and the wider district to connect readers to a range of interesting, informative, encouraging and enjoyable content from across the community. Meppershall can be proud of the contribution made by the whole team at the Meppershall Messenger and by its contributors, advertisers and supporters – ensuring the continuity of this important piece of village life through a period of unique challenges.

Contributions and Editorial Policy - The magazine welcomes contributions, ideas, information and letters – which can be submitted or discussed with the editors via email: mepp.messenger@gmail.com. It is founded on relevant, interesting content from the community and the editors have published every contribution submitted in the past year. Achieving a strong stream of articles, comments and opinion from people right across village life is the essence of the magazine and the editors remain committed to publish the full diversity of material submitted to them. Anyone can contribute. The editors additionally adjust the content of the magazine for quality, accuracy and formatting requirements.

Contributors this year have included Meppershall Parish Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Meppershall Good Neighbours (GNOMES), The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Meppershall Social Club, Meppershall Players, Andrew Pain, Paul Savuto – Personal Finance Pages, Wanderbus, Meppershall Book Club, Meppershall Craft Club, Enid Pamment – Shefford Leisure Group, Zoe Cox – Allotments, Macmillan Cancer Support – Meppershall Village Support Group, Campton Gardening Club, Central Bedfordshire Council, the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner, local developer Davidsons Homes, and many more.

Distribution and Reach of the Magazine - Each Meppershall Messenger edition is posted through every letterbox in the village in normal circumstances. This has been the case since the launch of the magazine in 1985. Additionally, we have maintained production of an online PDF version of the magazine – providing the entire issue, with advertising, in an easy-to-access file available on the village website (<https://meppershall-pc.gov.uk/the-meppershall-messenger/>). The Magazine committee would again like to extend our sincere thanks to The Parish Clerk, Alex, who has kindly uploaded the online version of the magazine to the village website each month and who maintains a strong connection between Meppershall Parish Council business and correspondence and the village magazine.

The social media link to the online PDF format of the magazine achieved an average of 156 downloads each month for Volume 37 (April 2021-March 2022), peaking at 454 in April 2021. Additionally, the magazine is viewed directly from the Meppershall.org website. The team therefore believe that the online readership is significant and that this

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is a significant and growing channel for connecting the magazine to its audience. In time, it will be important to consider improvements to the PDF format. Importantly, the average online downloads dropped significantly after printed distribution was resumed to each house in the village. When online was the only way to access the magazine, monthly downloads averaged 198. After printed copies became fully available again, monthly downloads dropped to an average of 92. This appears to be evidence for both the importance of the online version during lockdown, and the renewed engagement with the printed version (and hence reduced reliance on the online version) once printed copies reappeared in the village.

Social Media - The Meppershall Messenger page on Facebook -

www.facebook.com/themeppershallmessenger - currently has 224 followers. This page is used primarily to share the link to the current issue of the magazine. In addition, it shares other posts and information on an occasional basis to maintain and build its followership. It is able to share its posts to the 'Meppershall Noticeboard' on Facebook which has a greater and wider reach to the village as a whole. There is significant potential to strengthen the content and reach of the Meppershall Messenger Facebook page in the future and to consider the use of other social media channels – this will require a commitment of additional time from a volunteer to build the right content strategies and create and share the right posts on a regular basis (new team members will be very welcome). The magazine does not use any 'paid' (sponsored) distribution on Facebook – its reach is entirely 'organic'.

Finances and Advertising - The Meppershall Messenger is a not-for-profit publication. Its income covers its production costs – with the main costs relating to paper and printing. Those working on the magazine in any capacity are entirely volunteers. Income is derived from advertising, considering its strong value in reaching every household in the village with relevant and engaging local news, opinions and information. Additional income has been received from Meppershall Parish Council in the form of grants and a grant was also recently received from Central Bedfordshire Council.

After a decision to maintain advertising on a free-of-charge basis during much of the lockdown period, advertisers are now again being invoiced for their space in the magazine. We thank all the advertisers for their support and collaboration and we look forward to a return to normal arrangements for everyone by this time next year. Of course the base of advertisers changes over time. The team are looking for new advertisers for the coming year and are open to proposals and ideas for advertising and sponsorship opportunities.

Parish Council Minutes - The Editors are grateful to the Chair and Clerk of Meppershall Parish Council for the renewed quality and timeliness of MPC minutes for publication in the village magazine. They now come in a consistent format and are clear and comprehensive. Minutes from each Parish Council meeting are approved in the subsequent monthly meeting (one month later) and released for publication in the village magazine in the following month (two months after the original meeting). The minutes are available sooner via other channels.

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The Team and Contact Information - The Meppershall Messenger can be reached via email: mepp.messenger@gmail.com – we welcome any ideas, comments, articles, information and we love to hear from anyone wishing to be involved in any way – whether it's a one-off letter to the magazine or an offer to join the team and volunteer to bring new skills and ideas.

Co-Editors James Read and Mick Ridley share the role of editing and finalising each issue of the magazine and managing the ongoing stream of content. Contact them using the email address above. John Thompson is the Treasurer of the magazine. Andrew Pain is Advertising Manager. We thank Colette House for her long service as volunteer Distribution Manager (a role that she resigned in the past year) and for her ongoing proof-reading. Andrew Pain has kindly adopted the role of Distribution Manager for the time being (thank you Andrew!) We also say a big Thank You to Enid Pamment for her past volunteering as Production Coordinator, a role that she stepped down from in the past year.

A wider team of volunteers ('The Committee') were less active in the work of the magazine during lockdown, owing to the suspension of the printed edition. However their support and commitment is now once again crucial to the ongoing success of our much loved village magazine, as we have resumed complete printed distribution across the village, and we thank them very much on behalf of the whole village. New street-level distributors, particularly for the newly constructed parts of the village, are increasingly important and we continue to appeal strongly for new volunteers to step up and help in the year to come.

c. Meppershall Neighbourhood Plan – Mr A Pain - Chairman

The Meppershall Neighbourhood Plan had been making good progress towards submission for approval by the Inspectorate, and adoption by CBC before the impact of Covid. It had already been released to the Village in Draft form, and a formal 6-week consultation had been carried out, which resulted in some suggestions from the residents, and also some comments from potential developers regarding two possible greenfield sites for new housing, and their take on the undoubted benefits that would accrue to the village should these sites be recommended for housing!

These comments were noted, and the residents' suggestions and comments were considered, and small changes were made before final review by the Steering Group, which would have been followed by release of a final draft, and a village referendum conducted by CBC to formally approve the Plan on behalf of the village and consequent adoption by CBC into the Local Plan

But the Government made some changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2019 in respect of a "First Homes housing policy", which it was pointed out to us needed to be considered in our Plan, as if we did not incorporate a specific First Homes policy it would doubtless raise questions from the Inspector as to "why haven't you mentioned..." and the Plan could well be sent back for amendment.

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So the Clerk and our Consultant Sally Chapman made the requisite changes and the NPPF First Homes policy is now referenced in our plan, Policy H1 (Housing) having been modified accordingly.

This is considered a significant change to the Draft which had been approved, and so will require a further 6-week consultation exercise, which it is hoped will run from May 2nd. This is to cover just the revision to policy H1.

Following this consultation, the Draft Plan will be submitted for review to an external inspector, hopefully in July, before being submitted to CBC for a village referendum to be conducted, in Q3 it is anticipated.

The Steering Group is are still hopeful of the Plan being adopted by CBC late in 2022 for inclusion in their Local Plan.

Updates will be provided at the regular MPC meetings and the Messenger.

d. Wanderbus – Mr J Thompson – Treasurer

Fancy a trip to Cambridge? Or how about St Albans on market day? Or a walk along the river in St Neots? All these destinations are available on your local Community Bus service – Wanderbus.

Did you know that Wanderbus is a regular bus service open to all – whatever your age, just like any other bus service. Yes, we accept Concessionary Travel Passes for those of a certain age, but we also can accept cash fares for the younger age group to travel with us. We operate fixed weekday services to various destinations and you will find our timetables in The Messenger each month or check out our website – www.wanderbus.org.uk

During the months April through November, usually on the 4th Thursday of the month, we also offer day excursion trips to various Houses and Gardens or markets across Beds, Bucks, Herts & Cambs. These trips are also open to everyone. Again, check our website or The Meppershall Messenger.

Come try us out! You will be pleasantly surprised by the social and friendly atmosphere on the bus and we are sure you will make new friends with the regular passengers. You only have to wave to the driver and they will stop for you anywhere along Shefford Road /High Street / Rectory Road.

As a Community Bus, we are operated fully by volunteers and rely on passenger numbers to fund our operation from Council fare re-imbursement. Wanderbus has been running since 1989 and it was in 2015 that we bought a second bus as demand for our services was increasing and the Committee wanted to add new routes.

After all the COVID issues on 2020/21, we resumed services and in October 2021 produced a new timetable adding in monthly routes to Cambridge and St Albans.

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We will be looking to replace our older bus at the end of this year, so we really need the support of more of our village residents to use the bus and to ensure we can maintain our services.

We hope to see some new faces on board in the near future! Thanks for your support.

e. Pre-School – Report read by the Clerk

Meppershall Pre-school is a registered charity, run by a group of parent volunteers who together form our management committee. The committee are responsible for the employment of staff and the day-to-day management of the pre-school.

The Pre-school has been running since 1972 and has evolved in many ways in terms of both size, numbers of children and staff and changes in opening hours. We were first required to register with Ofsted in 1992. Our last Ofsted inspection was in January 2020 where we received another 'good' Ofsted grading.

We have children attending from Meppershall and the surrounding villages and feed into several local village schools with the majority of this year's cohort continuing their education at Meppershall Academy. We work closely with schools to ensure smooth transitions wherever they go to but have more visits to / from Meppershall as our local school and ease of communication and the fact that we can walk there.

The Pre-school aims to keep parent costs to a minimum whilst providing high quality pre-school education for our children, however the majority of the pre-school income comes from Central Bedfordshire Nursery Education Funding. This has increased by just 3% for 2-year-olds and 3.4% for 3- and 4-year-olds since Spring 2018. In the same period, we will have absorbed statutory minimum pay increases of 21.8% and rent increases of 36% which is not sustainable long term.

Despite a significant increase in housing in Meppershall, we have not yet seen a huge impact on our setting in terms of children numbers. We have a higher number of 2-year-olds than usual joining us in September this year, but would benefit significantly from a higher proportion of 3 year olds, as would Meppershall Academy for September 2023 so we are looking to boost our numbers as far as possible. An increase in 2-year-olds does also mean that we require more staff as the ratios are higher for this age group, so more children does not necessarily always mean more profit. However, our numbers for September 2023 will be significantly higher and so managing our waiting list is a good problem to have. Anyone with young children is encouraged to send an enquiry through our pre-school website, or to call us as soon as they can!

We continue to support all children who attend on an individual basis including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

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Outside of the 'management' / 'finance' remit, the Pre-school is thriving. We have a good reputation and are part of a local 'network' of pre-schools who support each other to ensure provision for children is of the highest quality.

This term we are hoping to be able to have our Sports Day as it was, pre-COVID, with parents / carers attending and hope to be able to perform a leaver's show in the Summer too, which parents will be invited too. These things had to be held virtually last year for obvious reasons.

We work to a 'hybrid' of in the moment planning, following children's interests and also add in activities to balance out the curriculum or to add new experiences or provoke children's interests on a day to day basis. The children have been busy growing flowers and vegetables in our eco garden and have recently harvested some spring onions which they are adding to potato salad when they make that this week. Our sunflowers have just been planted so hopefully you will see some of those in the play area soon.

We have a volunteer with us currently who is a vet, and have had staff bringing in their dogs to show the children whilst talking about what the vet does etc. Our 'home corner' area is also set up as a vets this week, for some imaginative play.

With limited funds we have not been able to provide items other than the 'day to day' resources we need and are looking for grants / financial assistance which would enable us to provide some UV protection & shade / all-weather shelter for the children in our outside play area. This would ensure the outside area remains a useable learning space at all times of the year and would protect children from the elements as necessary. We welcome any financial support so if anyone has any ideas regarding this please don't hesitate to get in touch!

Tamsin Osborn – Pre School Leader

f. St Marys Church – Mrs C Foster

Rev. Goodman is now looking after 3 Churches (Campton, Shefford and Meppershall) and this has created a lot of additional work. Regular Church services have now re-started on Sundays and Wednesday along with the continuation of live streaming of daily reflections which started during lockdown. The Church team are appreciative of assistance provided with grass cutting and maintenance.

7. ISSUE AND QUESTIONS RAISED BY PARISHIONERS

- a. S106 contributions** – It was noted that in recent parish council minutes an issue was raised with Central Bedfordshire Council regarding the allocation of s106 contributions from a developer – where and what happened? *The Clerk – s106 contributions for a development in Meppershall had been incorrectly allocated to another village. The Clerk and Ward Councillors reported the issue to Central Bedfordshire Council and they have taken the necessary actions to re-allocate the funds to Meppershall but also to ensure that a similar issue does not happen in the future.*
- b. Dogs on Centenary Field** - Can the Parish Council please clarify the situation with dogs, in particular those off leash, on Centenary Field and also laws on picking up dog mess? *The*

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Clerk – As part of their Public space protection orders Central Bedfordshire Council also have a Dog Protection Order that covers Centenary Field. In summary the order covers the following:

- ***Dog control and fouling*** - *If you are in control of a dog, you must (by law) pick up dog mess on any land with public access. This includes pavements, public footpaths, woodlands, agricultural land, and recreation areas. Individual must use an appropriate bin or take the dog's poo home. Even if they bag it, they will still be committing a littering offence if they do not deal with it responsibly.*
- ***Dogs on leads*** – *When walking a dog, dog walkers must keep it on a lead (it's an offence not to). This should be no longer than 2 metres, on land covered by a dog order. This includes cemeteries, marked sports pitches, A and B roads, adjoining footpaths and verges. It also applies to some car parks, picnic sites and sensitive wildlife areas at countryside sites.*
- ***Areas excluding dogs*** - *It is an offence to allow your dog to enter an exclusion area. Exclusion areas include all enclosed children's play areas and closed multi-use games areas. This also restricts dogs from designated education areas.*

Therefore in summary the fenced MUGA / pitch, the MUGA near the Village Hall and the fenced children's play area are all areas where dogs SHOULD NOT enter. The play area at Old Road Meadow will also fall under this order once re-developed. The Parish Council has locked the fenced MUGA / pitch as dog owners were using it as a dog exercise area and not picking up their dog mess. Until appropriate notices are displayed the area will be closed. Once additional pitches are marked out on Centenary Field and the Cemetery area is designated dog walkers will be expected to maintain their dogs on leads as per the CBC order. With regards to dog mess dog walkers should ensure that they bag and bin (or take home) any dog mess on all other areas of Centenary Field, Old Road Meadow, the public footpaths including rights of way around the village and on agricultural land – in fact they should always bag and bin their mess. It is inappropriate to subject our children, residents, employees and contractors to the issues caused by leaving dog mess on the floor or worst still bagging it and tossing it into hedges etc. As such, and due to the huge number of emails and correspondence received on the matter, the Parish Council has asked Central Bedfordshire Council to ensure Dog Wardens are patrolling Meppershall and its surrounds and to issue where appropriate fines. Unfortunately if dog walkers continue to leave dog mess on Centenary Field and Old Road Meadow the Council will look into creating its own bylaws that may include preventing dog walkers from entering Centenary Field but obviously this is something we hope we can avoid. In the immediate short term the Parish Council is looking to increase signage and the provision of appropriate bins in the village.

8. MEETING CLOSE

The Chairman thanked all those who had attended and closed the meeting at 20:05.

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