

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2022

PRESENT: **Councillors:** Thompson (Chair), Addy, Chapman, Crossley, Parsons and Standbridge
 The Clerk: A Marabese.
 Others: Ward Councillor Brown and 3 members of the public.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:05pm.

742. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Cllrs Morgan and Merryweather and Ward Cllr Liddiard provided apologies for absence that were accepted by Council.

743. CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman read the Parish Council notice and announcement in relation to meetings in connection to openness and transparently, and then advised those present of the following:

- a. To remind attendees of COVID safe meeting guidelines.
The Chairman reminded all those present at the meeting of the COVID-safe meeting guidelines. These will be reviewed at the next meeting of Council.
- b. To resolve to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours, if required. Carried.
- c. Other information.
- The MPC organised litter pick will take place on Saturday 26th March.
 - The Clerk has contacted both Shillington and Gravenhurst Parish Councils and Ward Cllr Graham regarding the suggestion of a village Special Constable and the questions raised by MPC. Subsequently the Clerk will be writing to Beds Police Chief Constable.
 - Clerk has received a request to hire the MUGA or similar green space for use of a BoxFit class from end of March that arrived too late to be part of this agenda. Clerk will provide a draft Hire of Open Spaces Policy and potential costs for MPC to consider at the next meeting.
 - The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has notified NALC that the appropriate sum for the purpose of section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 for local parish and town councils in England for 2022/23 is £8.82 per elector.
 - Reminder that the installation of new water pipes by Anglian Water will result in road closures in the village.

744. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

745. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:15pm) 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:

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- CBC population – Predicted population growth figures for CBC have been released. 294,000 currently. 329,000 predicted for 2031.
- Council tax collection – In 2021 CBC collected 96.1% of council tax due. The average in England was 95.7%.
- Council tax 2022-23 – CBC council tax consultation is currently underway. CBC wishes to increase council tax by an overall 1.95% (1% of social care and 0.95% for frontline services). Despite revenue from council tax CBC will still need to find savings of £5.9million.
- Grass cutting subsidy – The contribution received by local councils from CBC will increase by 6% in 2022/23 and will then increase by the rate of inflation year on year thereafter.
- Schools for the Future – The Shefford and Stotfold cluster will be the first to transition to 2 tier and CBC are awaiting the outcome of a meeting with BEST Multi Academy Trust (responsible for Robert Bloomfield, Samuel Whitbread and many other schools in the local area). A new primary school is to be built in Shefford off Hitchin Road. It will form part of the BEST Multi Academy Trust.
- CBC have appointed BP Pulse to provide electric charging point in the CBC area.

The following questions were raised or comments made by members of the public:

- What is happening with the provision of Year 5 and 6 schooling at Meppershall Lower who wish to remain in a local church ethos school? *AB – Meppershall Y5's are currently being schooled at Henlow Academy and Meppershall children should be able to attend the new school to be built in Shefford. But that new school will not be in our village, what is happening to the expansion of Meppershall? AB – This has not yet been decided.*
- CBC have advised that potholes off Shefford Road on the way to the Care Home are not their responsibility. Can the Parish Council assist in asking the road owner to fix the potholes? *JT – The Clerk will be asked to write to Meppershall Care Home and ask that they make the repairs.*
- Is there an update on the removal of the Acacia tree on Fowlers Drive? *Clerk is chasing contractor for new date.*
- Who is responsible for fixing the street lights on Walnut Tree Way as one light is not working? *Clerk – It is the responsibility of either the Management Company or Croudace. Clerk to write to Management Company.*

Standing orders were reinstated at 7:35pm

746. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 10th January 2022.
Proposed Cllr Standbridge/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 10th January 2022 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.

747. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Co-Option

- i. To consider any councillor co-option requests received.
No new requests received.

b. Consultations

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- i. To consider response to NALC policy Consultation Briefing - OFCOM Postal Regulation Consultation.

Councillors agreed that any review of OFCOM postal regulation of postal services from 2022-2027 must take account of the need to retain and support services for rural and village communities.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Clerk and Cllr Addy work together on a response to NALC and the OFCOM Postal Regulation Consultation. Carried.

- ii. To consider completion of NSALG 2022 AGM Delegate and Proxy.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Standbridge. Resolved that Cllr Merryweather be appointed as MPC delegate. Carried.

- iii. To consider response to Luton Rising (London Luton Airport) consultation on plans to expand the airport.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Clerk respond to the consultation with regards to the negative impact that expansion proposals will have on the wider community (e.g.: additional flights overhead and noise pollution). Carried.

c. IT – Website and Email

- i. Cllr Standbridge to provide an update on gov.uk domain changeover and Centenary Field video message.

Cllr Standbridge reported that the gov.uk domain changeover has taken place. Four councillors are yet to set up the new gov.uk emails (Clerk and Cllr Standbridge to assist where necessary). Visits to the website continue to rise. Cllrs Standbridge and Morgan have also filmed the Centenary Field video message but it requires refining. This will be provided to the Clerk ASAP for distribution at the beginning of March if possible.

- ii. To consider new MPC logo.

The Clerk and Cllr Standbridge provided all those present at the meeting with the opportunity to indicate which of the proposed new MPC logos they preferred. Councillors agreed that the preferred logo needed to be altered to replace the lion with the one currently used by MPC in gold.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Clerk and Cllr Standbridge make changes to the preferred new MPC logo and then issue accordingly. Carried.

- iii. To consider request from Comet to feature Meppershall in weekly village news.

The Clerk has received an email from the Comet. They have been running a weekly village news page in the Comet each week, and would love to feature Meppershall. They have asked if you have any news we would like to share or information on what the village has to offer, or anything about the village's history. They would also ideally need a picture to go alongside this. Councillors agreed that this was a great idea but that the Comet is not distributed to Meppershall residents (if distribution is an issue then copies could be left at the Village Shop, Social Club, Bakery, Care Home etc.)

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Clerk respond positively to the request and assist where necessary. Carried.

d. Stocken House Green Space

- i. Update from Clerk and Cllr Thompson on Agreement

Clerk and Cllr Thompson met online with Paul Waterfield of Davidsons on 3rd February to discuss issues concerning finalisation of the Management Agreement (we did not

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look at the Transfer assuming this would reflect any changes in the Agreement accordingly). Our agreed version of the Management Agreement has been forwarded to both solicitors requesting that they make necessary changes ready for signing.

Additional points were noted:

- The timber knee rail installed around the edge of the green space will be on Parish land and therefore the PC will be responsible for this.
- Davidsons will install gates at the main entrance to the land (across the retained land) and at the side entrance points. These are to assist with access but also to prevent unauthorised access and encampments in the future. Davidsons's solicitors will need obtain a legal agreement (grant of rights) to do this.
- Paul Waterfield will arrange to send over to MPC a phased plan of planting to assist us in organising arborist visits as agreed in the Agreement.
- Any defects both pre and post-handover / completion will be organised and paid for by Davidsons however hopefully with regular visits this should not present an issue for either the Parish or Davidsons.
- The management company who will be dealing with the SUDs management do not need access over what will be Parish lands so this can be excluded from the Agreement.
- MPC have provided details of standpipes installed at Centenary Field so that a similar product can be installed on site.
- Clerk to arrange meeting on site between our Arboculturalist and Paul Waterfield to inspect tree and shrub planting at end of March.
- Paul Waterfield to come back to MPC regarding additional defib. on site, contribution to new mower and planting of 2 Oak trees (Cambridge trees) Invitation to attend show home launch on weekend of 29th January.

No update has been received since the meeting from Davidson's solicitors.

Action: Clerk to chase Davidson's for an update.

ii. To approve Arborist Costs

Mr Alderman's costs for surveying on site are £150 per day (£80 for half a day) and £30 for a written report with images. He has suggested perhaps a maximum of 2 visits per year at Stocken House unless requested otherwise. The Clerk is proposing using appointing Mr Alderman as MPC's Arborist to also assist with works required to Old Road Meadow and Centenary Field.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to appoint Mr Alderman as MPC Arborist at costs quoted. Carried.

e. Collaboration with Gravenhurst Parish Council

i. To approve Sharing of Resources agreement between Meppershall and Gravenhurst Parish Councils.

The Clerk and Cllr Thompson provided councillors with a proposed agreement for review with meeting papers. Questions raised have been responded to and amendments as requested made to the agreement. It is proposed that the agreement, if approved by Gravenhurst Parish Council, starts on 21st February 2022.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to approve signing by Cllrs Crossley and Standbridge of the Sharing of Resources agreement between Meppershall and Gravenhurst Parish Council. Carried.

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f. Futures Working Group

- i. To consider remit, set up and membership

Cllr Parsons has prepared an article for publication that was circulated to councillors with meeting papers regarding a request for residents to join the Futures Working Group.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved that the Futures Working Group article as prepared by Cllr Parsons is released for publication. Carried

g. Electrical Connection from Old Road Meadow

- i. To consider request from UKPN to provide electricity connection from Old Road Meadow to The Mow site and Wayleave Agreement.

The Clerk met with UKPN on site they have advised that we do not have to agree to this request. UKPN are obliged to provide customers with the nearest connection point but if we do not give permission then they will simply have to look elsewhere. This may prove difficult as the nearest connection is on the High Street and would incur road closures. UKPN will not play middle man but they can forward on our details to their customer asking them to reach an agreement with us regarding access. This may afford MPC leverage with the developer of the MOW to agree terms permitting a direct connection from the pole currently in ORM e.g.: installation of fence on the boundary between us, a monetary contribution to the Parish Council. MPC need to be mindful of any legal fees required to draw up a contract but costs could be covered by the developer. The Mow's 13 dwelling application would have contributed just under £94k in s106 to various pots – they will contribute nothing for the 9 dwelling application.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council agrees in principle to a connection subject to the developer agreeing to MPC terms, Clerk to negotiate terms on behalf of MPC and agreement with the developer to be made via MPC Solicitor at Ross Williams Solicitors at developers cost. Carried

h. Honours nomination

- i. To consider whether MPC wish to nominate a Meppershall resident for an Honour. A resident has asked MPC to consider nominations for Honours. There is clear guidance from the Government on who can be nominated and how the application should be completed. *Councillors were asked to consider and bring forward nominations to the Clerk at a later date.*

i. Invitations

- i. To consider invitation from CBC to a Civic Service hosted by the Chairman in celebration of HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee on Sunday, 8th May at 3:00pm – St Mary's Church, Park Street, Woburn.
Councillors agreed that the Chairman, Cllr Thompson would attend on behalf of MPC.

748. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders

- i. To approve purchase order requests.
None required.

b. Document approval

- i. To approve amendment to bank mandate
The Clerk advised that Cllr Addy should be added to the bank mandate

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Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Clerk add Cllr Addy to the banking mandate. Carried.

- ii. To approve journal entries, bank reconciliations and bank statements.

The Clerk presented Bank Statements and Reconciliation reports 153 for the Current Account and 027 for the Savings Account. Reconciliation reports and statements were checked by Cllrs Addy and Crossley.

Proposed Cllr Crossley/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that Bank Statements and Reconciliation reports 153 Current Account and 027 Savings Account be approved and signed. Carried.

c. Orders for the payment of money

- i. A schedule of payments was distributed at the meeting for approval and authorisation.

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

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

749. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration

- i. CB/22/00199/FULL - 1 Rectory Road, SG17 5NB - Rear conservatory roof and wall glazing replaced with tiled lean-to roof and 3 roof windows, external cavity walls built up with new doors and window.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 22/00199. Carried.

- ii. CB/21/05392/ADV – Robinson Grove, SG17 5QR – Attaching two street signs to timber sleepers set in the ground and uplighting via a spike light.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 21/05392 on the grounds that; the signage does not conform to CBC street furniture guidelines and design policy, the MNP makes reference to conformity of the street scene in Meppershall, the sign and lighting seeks to urbanise the rural village, the sign and lighting are adjacent to the Meppershall Conservation Area, contributes to light pollution. 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.

750. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

a. Report from the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – Clerk

The plan is under review by the Clerk and Mrs Chapman.

751. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. OPCC grant funding update from Clerk (traffic monitoring and VAS installation)

The Clerk, Cllr Morgan and Ward Cllr Liddiard met with CBC Portfolio holder Cllr Ian Dalgarno in Meppershall on 21st January and together they walked the village and showed Cllr Dalgarno current traffic issues concerning residents and MPC. Cllr Dalgarno

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made suggestions regarding potential proposed solutions, however he noted that as data from the recent traffic monitoring and speed assessment was not yet available it may be best to organise a meeting with our Highways Officer so that we could discuss concerns, data from the traffic monitoring and potential solutions.

Traffic Monitoring and Speed Assessment Data summary

Speed Monitoring conducted at the following sites in December 2021:

- High Street (Between Fowlers Drive and Gregory Close - (Survey location - L/C 13));
- Fildyke Road (Between Chapel Road and Lyspitt Common – (Survey Location - Opposite No. 53)
- Shefford Road 1 (Survey location - Village Sign to North)
- Shefford Road 2 (Survey Location - Existing VAS - 32 Shefford Road, L/C 37)

CBC have undertaken an initial assessment of the locations in line with the Speed Indicator Device Guidance Document which has recently been adopted by CBC (Jan 2022). The Speed Limit at all the locations required is 30mph, therefore the 85th Percentile is 35mph. The speed data for the four locations can be summarised as follows:

- High Street (L/C 13)
 - Northbound 28.4 mph
 - Southbound 28.8 mph
 - Personal Injury Collison in the last 3 years - One serious outside No. 44.
- Fildyke Road (Opposite No. 53)
 - Eastbound 27.9 mph
 - Westbound 29.1 mph
 - Personal Injury Collison in the last 3 years – None
- Shefford Road 1 (Village Sign to North)
 - Northbound 37.5 mph
 - Southbound 36.7 mph
 - Personal Injury Collison in the last 3 years – Two - One Serious Collision on the approach to the speed limit change and one slight accident on the bend.
- Shefford Road 2 (Location of existing VAS (L/C 37))
 - Northbound 31.0 mph
 - Southbound 29.1 mph
 - Personal Injury Collison in the last 3 years – None on this stretch of road

The data collection shows that the locations on High Street, Fildyke Road and Shefford Road 2 do not meet the criteria for a SID to be installed and therefore these locations cannot be recommended. The location on Shefford Road 1 just south of the Speed Limit change demonstrates that the speeds are above the 85th percentile at Northbound 37.5 mph and Southbound 36.7 mph direction. There have also been 2 recorded personal injury collisions in the vicinity. Following the assessment it is considered that a replacement VAS at Shefford Road 2 would be the most appropriate use of the funding that has been received from the OPCC Grant and can be purchased and installed in the restrictive timescales that have been specified.

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Online meeting with Cllr Dalgarno, CBC Highways officer Lisa Wright, Cllr Liddiard, Cllr Thompson and the Clerk held on 3rd February. The proposals made previously by Cllr Dalgarno were discussed in the light of the speed assessments results, report and CBC guidelines. Conclusions as follows:

- a) CBC to install at the Shefford Road gateway entrance to the village a VAS (solar powered if possible) with 30mph and bend ahead alternating signs, appropriate 'other' road signage including but not limited to bend chevrons, road markings, new road layout signage etc.
 - b) MPC to apply via the RMF grant scheme for a village gateway at the Shefford Road entrance to Meppershall with signage that can be altered periodically and a 40mph buffer zone on Shefford Road from A507 to village entrance (2 applications).
 - c) It would be our intention to install both the VAS and gateway at the same time.
 - d) CBC to provide costings to MPC for both.
- b. To consider applications to the Rural Match Funding – Integrated Programme 2022/23 and 2023/24**

The Clerk had prepared and circulated with the agenda two RMF applications as referenced in agenda item 751.b), and confirmed that MPC could fund a successful application in the next financial year albeit the budget would need to be amended accordingly.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Clerk submit two RMF applications – village gateway and 40mph buffer zone. Carried.

752. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Centenary Field

- i. Update from the Clerk and Cllr Morgan
Revised quotes received from Sherriffs as expected. Meeting requested with Sherriff and to involve MVH so that we can plan a date for start of works, material storage areas etc. MPC to communicate works pending to residents in March 2022. Cllrs Standbridge and Morgan have prepared a video and this will be supported with an article in the Messenger. The Clerk met with Fresh Air Fitness regarding new gym equipment installation and to agree on order, installation etc. Padlock codes to pitch have been changed as a resident had worked out the code and was opening the locks to let his dog into the fenced pitch area.

- ii. To consider action required post tree inspection report

Meeting held with Mr Alderman who assisted with guidance of tree health on Centenary Field and ORM. 26 trees are dead on Centenary Field and will require removal and consideration for re-planting. He has provided us with information on best trees to plant and is willing to assist Mrs Thorne with trees at ORM.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Clerk put together a plan of action over the summer for re-planting in winter 2022/23. Carried.

b. Section 106 Cycle Network contributions

- i. To consider use of £1,012 of s106 Cycle Network contributions to be spent by May 2023.

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The Clerk advised that current unallocated s106 funds will be lost if not used by May 2023 and that MPC could seek to use funds to provide cycle and scooter parking at Centenary Field.

Action: the Clerk was asked to investigate options available for installation.

753. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:12pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be the 14th March 2022 in the Village Hall.

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