

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022

**PRESENT:**      **Councillors:** Thompson (Chair), Crossley, Merryweather, Morgan, Standbridge and Wright.  
                  **The Clerk:** A Marabese.  
                  **Others:** Ward Councillor Brown and Liddiard, and 4 members of the public.  
The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:02pm.

### 754. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Cllrs Addy, Chapman and Parsons provided apologies for absence that were accepted by Council.

### 755. CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman read the Parish Council notice and announcement in relation to meetings in connection to openness and transparency, 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 Merryweather. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours, if required. Carried.*
- c. Other information.
  - The most recent crime statistics show that there were 8 recorded offences for Meppershall in February.

### 756. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

### 757. PUBLIC SESSION

**At this point (7:05pm) 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:

- Community Grants Scheme – This has been approved by CBC and will be advertised from next month. This is different to the Ward Councillor Grant scheme as it is aimed at big projects e.g.: £10-15k that are deliverable in a year.
- CBC Design Guide Consultation – This consultation ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March but is important as it covers the parameters and framework for housing design. All residents are encouraged to respond.

Ward Councillor Brown advised the meeting that:

- Community Action Day – This will be held in Shefford on 22<sup>nd</sup> April in the little square near Morrison's. All organisations will be involved and residents will have an opportunity to ask questions and receive assistance. Details will be forwarded to the Clerk for publication.

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

- Earlier in the month the Clerk raised an issue with CBC regarding the allocation of s106 funds from a Meppershall development to another parish council. What action has been taken or is to be taken against the “human” who caused the error and their supervisor who did not pick up on the error before the unilateral undertaking was signed off? *ML is meeting with the CBC team later this week to discuss this matter with them and will report back at the next meeting.*
- Is there anything that can be done about the dog poo issue in the village, like a Poster campaign perhaps? *ML will ask CBC what posters etc. are available / can be used and if a social media campaign is possible. Action: Clerk to add to a map areas where more dog bins are needed and forward this together with ‘dog poo’ hotspots to ML.*

Standing orders were reinstated at 7:31pm

### 758. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022.  
*Proposed Cllr Standbridge/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.*

### 759. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

#### a. Co-Option

- i. To consider any councillor co-option requests received.  
The Clerk had previously circulated the application of Mr L Wright (present at the meeting) to all councillors and confirmed having spoken to him at length regarding the role.  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to co-opt Mr Leo Wright to the role of councillor at Meppershall Parish Council. Carried.*  
Cllr Wright signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office before the Clerk and Proper Officer and was then asked to join councillors in deliberating the business of the meeting by the Chairman.

#### b. Procedures

- i. To approve Hire of Open Spaces Policy.  
*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to adopt Hire of Open Spaces Policy v1.0. Carried.*
- ii. To approve Honorary Freedom of the Parish Policy.  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved to adopt Honorary Freedom of the Parish Policy v1.0 with the removal of section 7 in the draft. Carried.*

#### c. Health & Safety and Risk Management

- i. To receive MPC Risk Review Assessment report for 2021-2022 (actions to March 2023).  
The Clerk had previously circulated the MPC Risk Review Assessment report, Overall Risk Summary report and Allotments and Open Space actions plans to the Community Safety & Risk Management working group and then all councillors.

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*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the 2021-2021 Risk Review and actions be approved and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried*

- ii. To approve MPC Litter Pick Risk Assessment.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved that the MPC Litter Pick Risk Assessment be approved. Carried*

### **d. Annual Parish Meeting**

- i. To confirm arrangements for Annual Parish Meeting on 25th April, 7:00pm.

*Cllrs agreed to facilitate and hold the Annual Parish Meeting on 25th April, starting at 7:00pm in the Village Hall as per the approved meeting schedule and that the Clerk should publicise as normal.*

### **e. IT and Communications**

- i. Update on gov.uk domain changeover and Centenary Field video message.

Cllr Standbridge reported that the Gnomes had requested changes to their page on the MPC website that would be actioned once received. Some councillors are still not using their gov.uk email addresses and so the Clerk and Cllr Standbridge will arrange to see everyone who is having issues setting this up. The Centenary Field video message has been filmed but requires editing – Cllr Standbridge will arrange to do this with the Clerk and then upload to Facebook.

### **f. Stocken House Green Space**

- i. Update from Clerk and Cllr Thompson on Agreement

Davidsons are pending confirmation from previous landowners regarding our agreed version of the Management Agreement. Mr Alderman, MPC's Arborist is due to attend site on 31<sup>st</sup> March for his first inspection.

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

### **g. Electrical Connection from Old Road Meadow**

- i. Update from Clerk on negotiations regarding electricity connection from Old Road Meadow to The Mow site and to consider proposal made by Blakeney Estates.

Our solicitors, Ross Williams, have no experience in negotiating land matters as required by MPC in these circumstances and suggested we contact a land agent for advice. Brooks Leney were highly recommended and after providing details about our situation and speaking to them the Clerk, after consulting with the Chairman, appointed Brooks Leney to act on our behalf. In summary the following proposal has been made by Blakeney Estates Ltd to Meppershall Parish Council as a final and best offer for a Wayleave to connect electricity to their 9 unit development on adjoining land:

- Blakeney to erect a post and rail with stock netting fence along the entire Eastern Boundary;
- Blakeney to pay the Parish Council a straight payment of £30,000 with no conditions as to how funds are used;
- Agreement from Blakeney to fully re-instate any disturbed ground including replacing trees and hedges, to the satisfaction of the Parish Council;
- Blakeney Estates Ltd to cover the Parish Councils professional and legal costs plus VAT (total estimated at £5,500 plus VAT);

Our solicitors Ross Williams will be required to draw up the contract with input from Brooks Leney.

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*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the Council accepts the proposal made by Blakeney Estates Ltd for a Wayleave to connect electricity to their 9 dwelling development on the Mow and that the Clerk, Brooks Leney and Ross Williams Solicitors deal with Heads of Terms and contract. Carried*

### 760. FINANCE

#### a. Purchase Orders

- i. To approve purchase order of Platinum Jubilee Lamp Post Signs.  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to purchase Platinum Jubilee Lamp Post Signs at cost of £212 plus carriage and VAT. Carried.*
- ii. To approve all other purchase order requests.  
None requested

#### b. NJC Local Government pay rates applicable from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022

- i. To confirm receipt of NJC Local Government pay rates applicable from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and actions required.  
Councillors confirmed receipt of the NJC pay rates applicable from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and noted that the Clerk's March salary needed to include appropriate back pay and that an additional pension contribution would be required. The Clerk confirmed that these items had been addressed in payments pending approval at this meeting.

#### c. Document approval

- i. To approve journal entries, bank reconciliations and bank statements.  
The Clerk presented Bank Statements and Reconciliation reports 154 and 155 for the Current Account and 028 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 1574 and 155 Current Account and 028 Savings Account be approved and signed. Carried.*

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

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Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc			
BACS617	Community Heartbeat	New Defib	£2,118.00
FA02-2203	Mrs V Thorne	March salary	
DD01-2203	Standard Life	Clerks pension	£98.71
Payment requests received before agenda published			
BACS618	Meppershall Village Hall	Room Hire 14/02/22	£32.00
BACS619	Beds & River Ivel Internal Drainage Board	Drainage Rates	£2.32
BACS620	Gravenhurst Parish Council	Zoom Subscription	£60.60
BACS621	BATPC	Financed Training - WA	£30.00
BACS622	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	Allotments Software Annual License	£148.80
BACS623	Standard Life	Pension Back Pay	£21.24
SO02-2203	Miss A Marabese	March Salary	
BACS624	HMRC	PAYE & ER NI Q4	£931.62
Payment requests received after agenda published			
BACS625	AA Sherriff & Son	Pitch maintenance 2021	£3,675.00
BACS626	Pickerz.co.uk	20 litter pick bin bag hoops	£167.33
BACS627	A Marabese	Expenses (Various)	£558.48
BACS628	Scotts Ground Maintenance t/s Village Trees	Acacia tree Felling and hedge trimming	£850.00

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved that Clerk be authorised to arrange payment of any outstanding invoices relating to the current financial year received prior to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 up to a value of £1,000. Carried.*

### 761. PLANNING AND HOUSING

#### a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration

- CB/22/00475/VOC - Polehanger Farm, SG17 5LH - Variation of condition numbers 5 and 6 of planning permission CB/20/02153/FULL - extend the limit of hours for performing and/or playing or outside live or recorded music and for the music noise levels.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Standbridge. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 22/00475. Carried.*

- CB/22/00422/LB - Polehanger Farm, SG17 5LH - Listed Building: Repair structural timbers to roof of the barn.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved that the Council supports planning application 22/00422. Carried.*

- CB/22/00799/FULL - The Pigling, SG17 5LL - Erection of two detached dwellings with associated garages and carport.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 22/00799 and that the Clerk circulate the objection letter to councillors once completed. 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.*

### 762. 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. CBC contacted the Clerk to advise that they had sought legal advice regarding the implications for Neighbourhood

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Planning as a result of the National First Homes Policy Guidance. They have now received the advice from a QC, whose view is that since Neighbourhood Plans do not benefit from the transitional arrangements, and CBC do not have a Strategic Housing Mix Policy, in order to meet the basic conditions in paragraph 8 of schedule 4B of the 1990 Act, in particular para 2(a) which is whether - having the regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the [plan], - all NP's would need to consider and have regard to the First Homes Policy and seek to make provision for it. Moreover, if a NP chooses not to do this, reasoning must be given as to why this has not been done, notwithstanding the clear government guidance on this matter. Therefore, the QC is of the view that all NP's should to include the First Homes requirement within one of their policies or as a standalone policy. For the Meppershall Neighbourhood Plan, this could be most appropriate as an additional bullet point within policy H1. The QC has also advised that it would be prudent to re-consult on this policy addition/ alteration. However, if the plan continues with the policy addition without re-consulting, it may be able to seek to rely on consultation responses received from the next stage (Reg. 16), but this will depend on the approach of the Inspector. CBC therefore recommend that the national First Homes requirement is included within the Meppershall Neighbourhood Plan and you re-consult on this.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Standbridge. Resolved that the Clerk organise to re-consult on policy H1 of the Meppershall Neighbourhood Plan ASAP. Carried.*

### **763. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT**

#### **a. OPCC and RMF grant funding updates for the Clerk**

The Clerk reported that both RMF applications had been submitted to CBC and that VAS installation costs were pending.

### **764. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE**

#### **a. To appoint A&B Gardening Ltd as grass cutting contractors for 2022-2023 and approve revised pricing.**

The Clerk provided updated prices for grass cutting from A&B Gardening for 2022-2023.

*Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the Council appoint A&B Gardening Ltd as grass cutting contractors for 2022-2023. Carried.*

#### **b. Centenary Field - 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.

The Clerk and Cllr Morgan reported that:

- A meeting was held with Sherriffs on 7/03 involving MVH so that we can plan a date for the start of works, material storage areas, Heras fencing positions etc. Sherriffs will be sending over a planned schedule of works with approximate dates.



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- MPC will communicate works pending to residents in March 2021. 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 on 27th January to agree on the new outdoor gym equipment order, installation etc.
- Padlocks – 21/02 Children's play area large gate closed with padlock as users keep leaving it open. Pitch gate number padlocks were being opened by residents to exercise their dogs without permission therefore number padlocks removed and replaced with key locks.

### c. Litter Pick – Confirmation of plan for litter pick

The clerk has already received confirmation from residents wishing to participate in the litter pick and has purchased equipment required and organised collection of waste with CBC. Additional posts on Facebook are scheduled. Mrs Thorne is identifying areas for groups to work in. Mrs Thorne and the Clerk will organise refreshments for volunteers.

### 765. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:00pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in the Village Hall.

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

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#### Glossary

- CBC = Central Bedfordshire Council
- MPC = Meppershall Parish Council
- MVH = Meppershall Village Hall & MVHT = Meppershall Village Hall Trustees
- NP = Neighbourhood Plan
- ORM = Old Read Meadow Nature Reserve
- QC = Queen's Council
- VAS = Vehicle activated sign