

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2022

**PRESENT:**     **Councillors:** Thompson (Chair), Addy, Chapman, Merryweather,  
Morgan, Parsons and Wright  
                  **The Clerk:** A Marabese.  
                  **Others:** Ward Councillor Liddiard, and 5 members of the public.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:04pm.

## 793. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Councillors Crossley, Standbridge and Ward Councillor Brown provided apologies for absence that were accepted by Council.

## 794. 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 resolve to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours.  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours, if required. Carried.*
- b. Update on Beds Police Community Priority Setting Meeting  
The Chairman attended the Beds Police Community Priority Setting meeting and the presentation received at the meeting has been circulated to all MPC councillors. Discussion at the meeting were held regarding the special Constable for Meppershall, Shillington and Gravenhurst. Beds Police are aware of Meppershall issues including drug dealing and anti-social behaviour. Priorities for the area will be drugs and speeding.  
*Action: The Clerk was asked to arrange an advert for Speedwatch volunteers with Shefford and Campton and possibly Gravenhurst and Shillington.*
- c. Other information
  - CBC's Cheering Volunteering event was attended by Cllr Thompson and Mr Pain. There were circa 150 attendees for afternoon tea. It was a positive event with CBC Cllr Tracy Stock presenting on behalf of CBC. Cllr Thompson and Mr Pain took the opportunity to promote Meppershall to attendees.
  - Crime statistics for the village last month show 6 reported crimes.
  - Unfortunately Cllr Shephard has resigned from MPC. We wish him well for the future. The Clerk has advised CBC and appropriate notices have been issued and displayed.
  - *Proposed Cllr Thompson / Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to bring forward agenda item 803.c after item 797 so that members of the public so not have to wait until the end of the meeting agenda to hear MPC's decision. Carried.*

## 795. MEMBERS INTERESTS

- a. To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda and requests for dispensation.  
Cllr Thompson declared an interest in agenda items 799.a.i to iv.  
No dispensations requested or given.

## 796. 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.

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Ward Councillor Liddiard advised the meeting that:

- A507 – An accident on the A507 recently clocked the road at the Beadlow bends. This is an accident hotspot. Cllrs Liddiard and Brown are putting pressure on the CBC portfolio holder to improve the safety of the road in this location and will be asking for a reduction in the speed limit to 40mph with the installation of average speed camera. They will be raising this issue at the next full meeting of CBC's Council.
- M1/A6 link road – This has now received full planning permission and construction will start as soon as all land is in CC ownership.

*Cllr Parsons joined the meeting.*

- Polehanger bus stop – Cllr Liddiard will be attending a remote meeting with CBC officers and the Clerk on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June.
- OPCC & RMF applications – Cllr Liddiard has requested an update from CBC officers on both the MPC OPCC and RMF highways projects/applications.
- The Pigling – *The Clerk was asked to forward MPC's views on the revised application after a decision is made at this meeting.*
- MOT Testing Centres – CBC has opened two new MOT Testing Centres in Sandy and Dunstable. They will not carry out vehicle repairs.
- Walking and Cycling Strategies – CBC will be consulting on new walking and cycling strategies in July 2022.
- Grants Schemes – There are still funds available to apply for from both the Ward Councillor Grant Schemes and the Community Assets Grant.

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

- Mobile mast capacity - Since the recent new dwelling developments, the mobile service (voice & data) has become almost unusable in parts of Meppershall, I have two mobiles for work and personal (SKY & O2) on two different providers. After a lot of calls and research, it was confirmed there are 3 Telefonica masts supporting Meppershall and the surrounding area. 2 masts are now at full capacity, the 3rd almost full too. - Currently no 5G. Therefore, during peak times, the quality of the signal is lost as basically capacity is exceeded. What is the plan from CBC to work with phone companies to provide sufficient coverage and why is this not considered in the planning process? *See response below*
- Fibre for Meppershall - Parts of Meppershall such as Orchard Close still do not have Fibre. Evidence can be provided that there is no plan to resolve, the Fibre only goes to the Exchange Box in Shefford. What is the plan to resolve this as part of the government commitment to Fibre coverage? *Cllr Liddiard has received responses from CBC Officers and will forward these to the Clerk. In summary residents need to lobby companies regarding coverage and he will investigate what lobbying CBC can do for additional masts.*
- Will the A507 Pedestrian Bridge be saved? *Cllr Liddiard – It may be moved but not a response that can be given with any certainty.*

Standing orders were reinstated at 7:48pm.

### 797. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

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*Proposed Cllr Morgan/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.*

803. Agenda item 803.c discussed at this point in the meeting but for consistency minutes retained in numerical order.

### **798. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL**

#### **a. Procedures - Review and adoption of:**

- i. Code of Conduct v2.0  
*Deferred to next meeting.*
- ii. Scheme of Delegation v1.0 (NEW)  
*Deferred to next meeting.*

#### **b. IT and Communications**

- i. Update from Cllr Standbridge.  
Cllr Thompson will assist councillors with gov.uk email set up and Cllr Addy to provide a photo for the website.

#### **c. Stocken House Green Space**

- i. Update from Clerk and Cllr Thompson on Agreement including formal request made to CBC regarding adoption  
Davidsons are seeking to find alternative entrances into the green space should issues arise in the future with the retained strip of land. No response has been received from CBC after requesting information for changes required to the Unilateral Undertaking.  
*Clerk to chase CBC for an update.*

#### **d. 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.  
All paperwork has been completed including the Wayleave Agreement with UKPN.  
MPC is awaiting confirmation of completion.

#### **e. Wry Close Allotment Track**

7:46pm

- i. Update from Clerk subsequent to MPC request that The Sugarloaf PH find an alternative method of anchoring their gazebo so that does not involve use of the allotment track owned by MPC. To confirm action taken and any further action required.  
The Clerk and Cllr Thompson arranged an onsite meeting with The Sugarloaf PH Lease Holder on 23rd May however he did not attend and therefore a conversation was held over telephone. During the telecom the Landlord refused to remove the anchorings post our licence end date and refused to accept that MPC are the sole owners of the track. The Clerk after consulting with the Chairman contacted our Solicitor at Ross Williams and requested that she write to The Sugarloaf PH landlord setting out our position (letter forwarded to councillors). MPC must consider what to do if the Sugarloaf PH does not remove the anchoring's as requested and contact/advice has been sought from both our solicitor and Beds Police. Subsequent to receipt of the letter from our Solicitor the Lease Holder of The Sugarloaf PH asked to meet with the Clerk and Cllr Thompson on site on 13<sup>th</sup> June to discuss positioning of anchors. The Lease Holder is requesting that the anchorings remain in situ, having explained the

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difficulties in moving them, and has made a proposal for letting and maintaining part of the allotment track accordingly.

The Clerk advised that:

- Standing Orders section 7 state as follows: 7.1. *A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least 3 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the report or recommendation of a working group.* As the requirements of Standing Orders have not been met the resolution made in April 2022 stands.
- A key legal restriction is contained in the Allotments Act 1922, whereby there is a general prohibition on any “trade or business” being conducted on the allotment garden or any part thereof. An allotment garden must, by definition, “be wholly or mainly cultivated for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by the occupier or his family”. In letting part of the allotment track, which forms part of our allotment land, to a commercial business such as The Sugarloaf PH who is using the marquee for trade we would not be adhering to the Law.

*Proposed Cllr Chapman / Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the allotment track area is made safe by erecting safety fencing around it, that the Clerk seeks advice from the NSALG on the interpretation of the Law and that the Clerk seek advice from marquee installers on whether there is an alternative way of anchoring the marquee that does not involve the allotment track. Carried.*

## 799. FINANCE

### a. Purchase Orders

*Cllr Thompson left the room.*

- To approve purchase of replacement glass units for changing rooms. Cost = £860+VAT
- To approve purchase of blinds for changing rooms. Cost = £590.13+VAT
- To approve costs for works to changing room ceilings. Cost = £8,580.13+VAT
- To approve purchase of filing storage and installation. Cost = £1,800+VAT

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve purchase of glass units, blinds, filing storage and costs for works to changing room ceilings. Carried.*

- To review quotations and approve cost to repair Festival of Britain sign.  
*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve cost to repair Festival of Britain sign as provided by Projects in Wood & Artisans in the Yard at circa £400+VAT. Carried.*

- Defibrillator order update and to consider whether to accept alternative.

The Clerk has chased delivery of the defibrillator ordered in February and has been told that deliveries are expected in July. The delay is due to a shortage of microchip parts. An alternative defib has been offered but this would mean accepting a different model to those already installed and maintained by MPC. *Councillors agreed that MPC should not accept the alternative at present and review the situation in September.*

### b. Document approval

- To approve journal entries, bank reconciliations and bank statements.  
No documents requiring approval.

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### 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 Addy. Resolved that the schedule of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment by Cllrs Thompson and Parsons. Carried.*

Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc			
Payment requests received before agenda published			
BACS643	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	Alpha Software Annual Support and Maintenance	£154.80
BACS644	Meppershall Village Hall	May meeting room hire	£32.00
BACS645	Fresh Air Fitness	Outdoor Gym equipment deposit	£10,587.30
Payment requests received after agenda published			
FA01-2206	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (Payable 14/06/22)	
FA02-2206	NEST	EE Pension contribution (Direct Debit)	
FA03-2206	NEST	ER Pension contribution (Direct Debit)	£46.13
SO01-2206	Miss A Marabese	Salary (Payable 15/05/22)	
BACS646	Mrs V Thorne	Expenses (mowing supplies)	£29.55
BACS647	HMRC	Q1 EE & ER NIC & PAYE	£423.54

## 800. PLANNING AND HOUSING

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

- i. CB/22/01804/OUT - Greenwoods, Land North of Higham Road and East of the A6 Bedford Road, Barton Le Clay, Bedfordshire - Outline Application: Erection of up to 3,750 residential units (Use Class C3..... All matters reserved except for details of access to and from the A6, Higham Road and Gravenhurst / Barton Road.

*Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 22/01804. Carried.*

- ii. To endorse the Gravenhurst Parish Council objection to planning application 22/01804.

*Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the endorse Gravenhurst Parish council objection to planning application 22/01804. Carried.*

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

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 22/00799. 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.*

## 801. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

Re-consultation of MNP Draft Plan policy has started and will end on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022. A new grant application for 2022-2023 has been approved by Groundworks. Our consultant is working on the updates to the draft NP.

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### 802. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

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

The Clerk has not received an update on either the OPCC or RMF grant funding.

*Action: Cllr Thompson to write to Richard Wenham and the PCC regarding the last of communication and movement on the part of CBC. Where possible an MPC councillor should attend the next CBC Full Council meeting and pose the question regarding updates.*

#### b. Update on proposed action to deal with vehicles driving along the Hoo Road bridleway.

The Clerk has been discussing the issue of vehicles using the Hoo road bridleway with our CBC Right of Way Officer is proposing installation of a drop-down horse barrier close to Chapel Road and is contacting relevant landowners for permission. Once these works are completed then repairs will be made to the bridleway.

#### c. Update on discussions with CBC on bus stop locations in the village.

Meeting with CBC officer scheduled for Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June to discuss. Cllr Liddiard, Cllr Thompson and the Clerk to attend. It was noted that new bus stop signs have appeared at the Care home and outside 19 Shefford Road.

#### d. To consider joint street and speed watch initiative with Campton and Shefford

Due to a lack of volunteers, street and speed watch initiatives in a number of adjoining parishes may close. Meppershall has been asked if they would like to consider a joint initiative with both Campton and Shefford. Councillors agreed that this would be a good initiative to be part of and asked the Clerk to proceed.

### 803. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

#### a. Centenary Field

##### i. Update on works

- MVH have questioned the bund uniformity in size and whether they are large enough. The Clerk is investigating this.
- Areas behind the Village Hall have been stripped, top soil added and seeded. The recent downpours have caused issues with seed run off and so the contractors have been back to site twice to reseed.
- Drains have been installed behind the village hall. The main Centenary Field drain install differs to the original plans due to land heights and falls.
- The sports pitch has been scarified, top soiled and reseeded. The grass seed previously in situ was not football grass seed. Contractors will return in a fortnight to review.
- Track around the fenced sports pitch has been installed.
- Corner of sports pitch build out has been completed.
- Install of gym equipment pending.

##### ii. Hire request – To consider request of availability and hire rates for Centenary Field (required once a week during term time 3:30-4:30pm for children to do Rugby/Cricket sessions with a coach).

A request has been received (from a home-education group hiring MVH twice per week) looking to hire from September 2022 any green space near the Village Hall once a week for an hour for a group of 15-20 children aged 5-10 to play rugby and cricket on, (whatever we think is appropriate). These activities are separate to the main Home education group but there is some overlap.



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*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that the Council approves the hire at a cost of £15 per hour subject to necessary completion of documentation. Carried.*

**b. Signage update and to consider costings**

Defer to July meeting.

**c. To consider request to plant a commemorative tree in honour of a deceased village resident.**

The Clerk was contacted on behalf of a group of friends who, 20 years ago, studied part time on a Horticultural course at Shuttleworth College. One of their members, Wendy Reece, lived in Shefford Road in Meppershall and was very involved in the community but sadly died a few years ago. Both she and her husband are buried in our Parish Church graveyard. The group of friends have tried to arrange a suitable memorial for her but have had offers of tree planting rejected by Shuttleworth College, St Mary's Church and The Woodland trust do not have a suitable scheme. In this year when tree planting is so encouraged the group is asking MPC if we have a suitable location in Meppershall where we would be prepared for the group to plant a tree, preferably a native tree (species to be agreed with MPC) together with a plaque in Wendy's memory? The group are aware that future maintenance has to be considered and the species and location of any new tree has to be considered carefully.

*Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that the Council approves the installation of a tree(s) on Centenary Field in memory of Mrs Reece by her group of friends in the autumn and that the Clerk specify type to be installed. Carried.*

### 804. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

**a. To receive minutes of Personnel committee meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

*Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Council receives and approves the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Carried.*

### 805. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:17pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be the 25<sup>th</sup> July 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
- GPC = Gravenhurst Parish Council
- MPC = Meppershall Parish Council
- MVH = Meppershall Village Hall & MVHT = Meppershall Village Hall Trustees
- NP = Neighbourhood Plan
- ORM = Old Read Meadow Nature Reserve