

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 25TH JULY 2022

PRESENT: **Councillors:** Thompson (Chair), Chapman, Crossley, Morgan, Parsons and Wright
 The Clerk: A Marabese.
 Others: Ward Councillors Brown and Liddiard, and 4 members of the public.
The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:17pm.

806. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Councillors Addy, Merryweather and Standbridge provided apologies for absence that were accepted by Council.

807. 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 Morgan. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours, if required. Carried.
- b. Other information
 - Apologies were given for the delay in the start of the meeting and explained that this was due to an inspection of Centenary Field and works completed by and with AA Sheriffs, out contractors.
 - A notice on openness and transparency of the meeting was read out.
 - The Chairman advised that subsequent to issuing the agenda a notification has been received of CBC's intention to refer planning application CB/22/00799/FULL - The Pigling, SG17 5LL (Erection of two detached dwellings with associated garages and carport) to DMC, subsequent to Planning Officer recommendation for approval. MPC have been asked if they wish to speak at the DMC meeting on Wednesday 3rd August. Councillors agreed to add this to the meeting agenda as item 813.a.viii albeit it would be covered under agenda item 811.c.i.
 - The next Beds Police Community Priority Setting meeting is to be arranged for September.
 - It was great to see that the number of crimes reported in Meppershall had fallen to one for the latest reporting period.

808. MEMBERS INTERESTS

- a. To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda and requests
Cllr Thompson declared an interest in agenda item 813.a.vi.
No dispensations requested or given.

809. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:22pm) 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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- Schools For the Future – The CBC Executive Committee agenda for 11th October 2022 includes the Schools for the Future proposal for the Shefford cluster and this will include the approval of a new primary school off Hitchin Road in Shefford.
- Local Plan - The outcome of The Local Plan review currently underway by CBC will be on the Executive Committee agenda for 6th December 2022. This review focuses on everything that has changed in government policy versus the adopted plan. There will be no change in allocations for Meppershall and other villages until the mid-term review expected to take place in 2024. As CBC is meeting its five year housing supply (currently 5.6 years forward supply) there is no need for windfall sites.
- 2021 Census – The 2021 Census data has been released and shows a population of 294,200 for Central Bedfordshire. Central Bedfordshire is therefore among the fastest growing areas in England. Our population has increased by 15.7% since the last census against an average increase in England of 6.6%.
- Ukrainian Refugees – At the end of June 2022 there were 299 Ukrainian refugees, including 105 children, living with 123 sponsors in Central Bedfordshire.
- Highways improvements – Still trying to get Brookmead and Brookside footpaths onto next year's CBC Highways plans for resurfacing.
- Will not be able to attend the 3rd August DMC meeting when The Pigling planning application will be decided.

Ward Councillor Liddiard advised the meeting that:

- CB/22/01261/OUT - 100 High Street, SG17 5LZ – Planning application has been refused and CBC have been advised that the applicant intends to submit a planning appeal which is likely to be a 4 day hearing. The Planning Inspectorate are currently taking between 9 to 12 months to hear appeals and CBC will be defending their decision.
- MPC RMF applications – An email has been sent to the CBC Highways Deputy Director requesting an update with all officers copied into the email. The CBC portfolio holder, Cllr Ian Dalgarno is aware of the issue as are Cllr Richard Wenham and Marcel Coiffait.
- Chapel Road – Has been resurfaced. The road condition is looking better now after a couple of days use but there are some areas that are not great and these have been reported to the Highways team.
- Cool Spaces – During the recent hot weather CBC had advertised a number of 'cool spaces' that residents can have access to e.g.: libraries and leisure centres. Residents do not need to be members to make use of the cool spaces.
- Solar Together – 6000 applications have been received and quotes issued to residents by four companies chosen to do the work.
- Fowlers Drive – The issue of trees on the corner of Fowlers Drive causing concern to the home of a resident has been passed to the Highways Tree officer James Coggins who will make direct contact with the resident.

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

- Over two years ago a S278 Agreement was agreed on the 15 Shillington Road Development aimed at installing traffic calming measures which included the replacement of the Shillington Road VAS. To-date no progress has been seen in this respect? Can our Ward Councillors please enquire why nothing has been undertaken or carried out?
Cllr Brown and the Clerk were advised on 11th July that the developer has a completed S278 agreement along with technical approval. CBC have spoken with the developer and they have applied to close the road off in front of the development to surface the carriageway. He

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is going to get back to CBC with an exact date but it's in roughly 8 weeks' time (Sept). The Clerk has received confirmation that the VAS and village gateway sign will be replaced and road markings created as per drawings previously supplied. The contractor is to return the current village sign in situ to Meppershall Parish Council as it belongs to us and not CBC.

Standing orders were reinstated at 7:46pm.

810. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 13th June 2022.

Proposed Cllr Morgan/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 13th June 2022 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.

811. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Councillor Co-option

- i. To consider councillor co-option requests received.
An application previously received and circulated has been withdrawn.

b. Procedures - Review and adoption of:

- i. Code of Conduct v2.0
Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to approve and adopt MPC Code of Conduct v2.0. Carried.
- ii. Scheme of Delegation v1.0 (NEW)
Deferred to next meeting.

c. Delegation arrangements

- i. To approve delegation arrangement for payments and all other issues until the next MPC meeting on 12th September 2022.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Clerk be given delegated powers to approve payments up to £1000 and all salaries with Cllr Thompson and Parsons approval. All other items requiring a decision by MPC prior to the next meeting to be made by the Clerk after consulting with councillors. Carried.

d. IT and Communications

- i. Update from Clerk.
Website updates made to Gnomes webpage and site updated to latest version of the platform. From June through to July, we have had 812 users on site. There was an unexpected spike of 107 users on the 22nd June, though this is pinging from the USA, which indicates bots are crawling our site - this is a GOOD thing, it means we're more likely to be found when people search in Google, rather than going straight to meppershall-pc.gov.uk. Of the actual real, human users from the UK, the Homepage, Messenger and Meetings pages were most popular.

e. Community Safety

- i. To consider invitation to sign up to Community Safety Charter.
The Community Safety Charter encourages everyone from individuals, Neighbourhood Watch groups, businesses, and organisations to take an active stance against crimes in public spaces, such as harassment, hate crime, and antisocial behaviour.

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The Charter tagline is #BETHECHANGE, focusing on the role of active bystanders in leading the change within their communities. The Charter supports greater understanding about how we recognise and deal with community safety issues and support victims by knowing where to get help, how and who to report to, enabling a more positive, proactive approach by the whole community when witnessing or experiencing confrontation, hostility, or harassment.

By signing up we would be agreeing to pledge to four actions:

- PROMOTE - promote a culture that does not tolerate harmful language, antisocial behaviour and hostility toward others,
- ENABLE - enable others to identify and take an active stance to prevent harassment, antisocial behaviour and intimidation within their community,
- REPORT - actively encourage and support others to report harassment, antisocial behaviour and intimidation and share intelligence about these crimes with the relevant authorities, and
- SUPPORT - support those affected by harassment, antisocial behaviour and intimidation and refer victims to the appropriate support agency.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that MPC sign up to the Community Safety Charter. Carried.

f. Stocken House Green Space

- i. Update from Clerk and Cllr Thompson on Agreement including formal request made to CBC regarding adoption

The Clerk has been contacted by Paul Waterfield of Davidsons but a meeting is yet to be scheduled. *Clerk to chase for meeting date with Davidsons and CBC for an update.*

g. Wry Close Allotment Track

- i. To review advice given by NSALG together with feedback on other actions requested at last meeting prior to making decision on Sugar Loaf PH use of allotment track for anchoring gazebo (stretch tent).

The Clerk confirmed the following:

- She has contacted a number of expert stretch tent installers who have confirmed that the stretch tent can be secured differently and that half a days work would be required to move it.
- NSALG have confirmed that if MPC purchased or appropriated the track as for the use of allotments, then the whole site becomes 'Statutory Allotment Land'. Any disposal of such land has to be via an application to the Secretary of State. As this is part of the entrance to the site and could perhaps restrict deliveries, then MPC perhaps ought not to consider this route. Also NAS are part of any disposal consultation with the Secretary of State. A short-term agreement for a specific event, would be acceptable, long-term arrangements affecting the use of the land would be treated differently.
- Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 requires that local authorities must seek the Secretary of State's consent if they propose to sell, appropriate, use or dispose of the land for any purpose other than as allotments, land which was originally purchased or appropriated for use as allotments. The allotment track is part of our statutory allotment land and therefore we would need Secretary of State approval for letting part of the track to the Sugarloaf (this is not an easement for utilities which does not require approval). This would require

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consultation etc. and as a long-term agreement would affect access etc. It is not likely to be approved.

- 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. No motion has been received.

Councillors agreed that the Clerk had exhausted all routes and that there was no alternative than to request removal of the anchorings. Not to do so would only cause greater issues in the future.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Clerk and Cllr Thompson meet with the Sugarloaf representatives and explain why the gazebo (stretch tent) anchorings must be moved off the allotment track by 30th September. The meeting is to be followed up with a letter from MPC confirming action to be taken. Carried.

Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that if the Sugarloaf PH does not remove anchorings on the Allotment Track by 30th September 2022 the Clerk is to instigate legal action. Carried.

812. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders

- i. To approve purchase order requests

- 1. Tennis posts, nets and line marking kit and accessories

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to purchase tennis posts, nets and line marking kit (and accessories) with s106 funding. Carried.

- 2. Minipod for scooter and cycle parking complete with installation.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that if s106 Cycle network funding is available to use funds to purchase and installation of Minipod. Carried.

b. CBC Community Asset Grant Application

The Clerk and Cllr Thompson have prepared a grant application requesting £25k of funding to support the provision of play, sports and leisure facilities at Old Road Meadow to be used in addition to s106 funding and PC reserves. The application is supported by our Ward Councillors.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved to approve the submission of a Community Asset Grant application to CBC for play, sports and leisure facilities at Old Road Meadow. Carried.

c. Document approval

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

No documents requiring approval.

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 Chapman and Standbridge.

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Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that the schedule of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment by Cllrs Thompson and Parsons excluding BACS654 and BACS659 as these invoices are in query with suppliers. Carried.

Payment No:	Payee	Purpose	Amount
Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc			
FA01-2207	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (Payable 12/07/22)	
FA02-2207	NEST	EE Pension contribution (Direct Debit)	
FA03-2207	NEST	ER Pension contribution (Direct Debit)	£52.49
SO01-2207	Miss A Marabese	Salary (Payable 15/07/22)	
DD02-2207	Everflow	Allotment Water (payable 18/07/22)	£200.13
Payment requests received before agenda published			
BACS648	Lucas, Huntley and Co	Parish Facilities - replacement units	£1,032.00
BACS649	Mrs V Thorne	Expenses - various	£34.94
BACS650	BJ Foster	Repair to cemetery standpipe	£96.96
BACS651	BJ Foster	Allotment water works	£1,516.08
BACS652	Ross Williams Solicitors	Land Matter Sugarloaf PH	£720.00
BACS653	Ross Williams Solicitors	HM Land Registry Fees	£6.00
BACS654	A&B Gardening Ltd	May Grass Cutting (invoice in query)	£2,461.62
BACS655	A&B Gardening Ltd	June Grass Cutting	£631.62
BACS656	Meppershall Village Hall	June Meeting	£32.00
Payment requests received after agenda published			
BACS657	AA Sherriff & Son	Works to football pitch to date	£4,364.28
BACS658	AA Sherriff & Son	Track installation	£16,800.00
BACS659	AA Sherriff & Son	Amenity Grasss Works (invoice in query)	£18,877.68
BACS660	AA Sherriff & Son	Pitch improvements	£15,763.80
BACS661	AA Sherriff & Son	Outfield Drainage	£30,366.50

813. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration

- CB/22/02314/FULL - 73 Shefford Road, SG17 5LL - Single storey side and rear extensions.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Crossley. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 22/02314. Carried.

- CB/22/02025/FULL - Standalone House, Campton Road, SG17 5PB - Two storey side extension.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 22/02025. Carried.

- CB/22/02424/ADV - ACO Technologies Plc, Hitchin Road, SG17 5TE - Advertisement: Fixed non-illuminated company logo sign to front of new building.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 22/02424. Carried.

- CB/22/02505/FULL - 22 Brookmead, SG17 5SA - Single storey rear & side extensions. Cllr Thompson did not participate in this agenda item.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 22/02505. Carried.

- CB/22/01861/LB - The Hollies, 2 Shillington Road, SG17 5ND - Listed Building: Restoration, repairs and minor modifications to preserve the property's heritage

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appearance, including: Roof repairs and replacement of chimney pots and refurbishment of windows and front entrance.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 22/01862 however that a comment be submitted requesting the Conservation Officer to visit the site to confirm works are being carried out as per the any granted planning permission. Carried.

- vi. CB/TCA/22/00344 - The Hollies, 2 Shillington Road, SG17 5ND - Works to trees within a Conservation Area: Prune fruit trees (labelled fruit trees), pruning required to bring them back to good health. Reshape Hedgerow (labelled hedgerow).

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council has no objection to works to trees application TCA/22/00344. Carried.

- vii. CB/TCA/22/00347 - Church Of Saint Mary The Virgin -Works to trees within a Conservation Area: T1 Remove basal shoots and epicormic growth to main branch union and remove deadwood. T2 Remove Basal Shoots and epicormic growth to main branch union and remove deadwood. Also raise crown to 2.5m. T3 Remove Basal Shoots and epicormic growth to main branch union and remove deadwood. Also raise crown to 2.5m.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council has no objection to works to trees application TCA/22/00347. Carried.

- viii. To confirm attendance at DMC meeting on 3rd August regarding CB/22/00799/FULL - The Pigling, SG17 5LL - Erection of two detached dwellings with associated garages and carport subsequent to Planning Officer recommendation for approval.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that Cllr Thompson represent MPC at the DMC meeting regarding planning application 22/00799 and re-iterate MPC's objection. Carried.

b. To consider email correspondence received concerning proposed development of 7 Shefford Road.

The Clerk received an email on 23rd June from a Planning Consultancy firm providing a link to a consultation website which gives outline details of a proposed new development on land at and to the rear of 7 Shefford Road. The email requested that the Clerk share the link to any other interested parties and said that they welcomed the opportunity of answering any questions the Parish Council may have via email, telephone or an in-person meeting. Councillors had reviewed the limited information available on the consultation website and decided not to engage with the Planning Consultancy firm at this present time. Ward Councillors had confirmed earlier in the meeting that the Local Plan review would not allocate any further housing to Meppershall and that CBC was able to demonstrate a robust 5 Year (Plus) Forward Land Supply and was meeting its targets for delivery of built homes with currently a 5.6 year supply. Also, classified as a small village, Meppershall would only be subject to small scale (1-2 homes) infill development.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved that the Council does not currently engage with the Planning Consultancy Firm regarding a proposed development at 7 Shefford Road. Carried.

c. To consider action to be taken in the light of CBC not consulting MPC on the new name for the development of 5 homes at 1 Shefford Road.

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After a resident advised the Clerk that the development at 1 Shefford Road had erected a new street name of Poppy Gardens she requested confirmation on the situation from CBC as no consultation with MPC had taken place.

CBC's Building Control Admin Manager responded as follows:

"Thank you for taking my call today, with regards to the signage. I have spoken to the developer who has advised that they will get it moved further back from High Street and to an angle to denote it is the entrance to the new street.

With regards to the street name; I am very sorry to confirm that you are absolutely correct and the Parish Council were not consulted in this case, this was an oversight on my part for which I wholeheartedly apologise. We are in the process of working with a software developer to upgrade the system we use and this will include the street naming and numbering function, as a result of this issue, we will ensure that the new system is developed to make certain the Town and Parish Council Consultation stage is not able to be missed in future.

The Developer has, I am afraid confirmed that some of the properties are in the process of being sold already and in addition to this the addresses are now held with utility companies, Land Registry, Ordnance Survey and Royal Mail etc. and so it is too late unfortunately to change the street name.

Once again I am sorry for issues my error has caused and seek to assure you of my best intentions at all times."

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Clerk write to CBC regarding our extreme displeasure about this issue and the situation we now find ourselves in and ask them to review their current procedures to ensure this does not happen again. 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.

814. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

Re-consultation of MNP Draft Plan policy H1 has now closed with few responses received. Our consultant is working on the updates to the draft NP but has been taken ill and so has a backlog.

815. 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 from CBC. *Action: Cllr Thompson to write to CBC Senior Leadership team and the PCC regarding the last of communication and movement on the part of CBC. Clerk to email and post letter.*

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

The Clerk has been trying to contact land owners who about the Hoo Road Bridleway to see if they would agree to the installation of a gate to restrict vehicular access but has not had responses to emails of telephone calls and messages left.

Action: Clerk to write to them with recorded / registered mail.

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

Deferred to next meeting.

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816. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Centenary Field

- i. Update on drainage and landscaping works and any actions required.

Parish Councillors and MVHT who were available attend a site visit of Centenary Field with AA Sherriffs prior to the meeting to review the site and works carried out, discuss any concerns and to agree on next actions. In summary neither MPC nor Sherriffs could have predicted that we would be experiencing one of the driest summers since 1976 and this event has had an effect on works carried out especially on the main field that has large fissures in it not only along the new drainage lines but in other areas of the main field. Despite weather conditions the pitch area is doing well compared to other local facilities.

Actions for Sherriffs are as follows:

- Bunds to be removed and post and rail fence to be installed with drop down bollard at entrance to Centenary Field near PC Stores. The overflow parking area to be left as grass only. Excess soil to be added to rear of Centenary Field. Quote to be submitted.
- Invoice for water sprinklers to be forward.
- Weed spraying to take place on all Centenary Field when conditions permit. Quote to be submitted.
- Sherriffs to supply labour and MPC to provide material for main field drainage top up to be carried out when ground conditions permit. Quote to be submitted.
- Grass re-seeding to be carried out when weather conditions permit.
- Main field would benefit from verti-draining at same time as pitch area. Quote to be submitted.

Actions for MPC:

- Heras fencing to be re-positioned on Saturday 30th July so that all areas of Centenary Field except the main field are open to the public.
 - Danger / No entry signs to be added to fencing.
 - Request for volunteers to help with repositioning fencing to posted to Facebook. Refreshments at café to be offered to volunteers.
 - Signage and posts on social media to request that dog walkers clear up dog mess.
- ii. Update on gym installation and any actions required.
- Installation of gym equipment completed on 15th July however ground conditions have made installation of grass mats impossible. Contractors had to use a power breaker to create the footings rather than use hand tools which they would normally do. Because of the ground conditions they were not able to fit the grass matting the way they should be fitted and proposed postponing this part of the installation until there has been some rain and the ground conditions have changed. Clerk agreed with supplier that they will be installed when ground conditions permit and goods will not be invoiced until mats installed.
- iii. To consider hire of MUGA and / or some of the green space next to it for use as a dedicated play area for home schooling initiative during term time.

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It was agreed that the Clerk and Cllr Thompson would meet with the organisation to better understand their requirements however any restricted use of areas for a considerable amount of time by residents was to be avoided.

b. Update on Wildflower workshop.

Mrs Thorne and Mrs Parsons attended a Wildflower workshop organised by CPRE on behalf of MPC. They learnt amongst other things about how soils and shade can impact on a site and misconceptions on how wildflower meadows should look. In summary meadow making is a trial and error labour of love and therefore it is important to manage public expectations and to ensure the public acknowledge that this is a long term project. Mrs Thorne is currently investigating which wildflowers to focus on other than yellow rattle and will provide a plan for the September meeting.

Action: Clerk to organise an Environment and Leisure Working Group meeting before 12th September.

c. To consider plans and choice of play equipment for both Centenary Field and Old Road Meadow.

Proposals to be submitted for the September meeting.

d. Signage update and to consider costings.

Deferred to next meeting.

e. To consider taking part in Love Parks initiative organised by Keep Britain Tidy.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council take part in the Love Parks initiative. Carried.

817. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:50pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be the 12th September 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
- DMC = Development Management Committee
- 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
- VAS = Vehicle Activated Sign