

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 9TH JANUARY 2023

PRESENT: **Councillors:** Thompson (Chair), Addy, Chapman, Crossley,
Merryweather, Morgan, Parsons and Seaman
 The Clerk: A Marabese.
 Others: Ward Councillors Brown and Liddiard, and 2 members of the public.
The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:15pm.

844. MINUTES SILENCE

Not relevant as observed in November meeting.

845. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Councillors Standbridge and Wright provided apologies for absence that were accepted by Council.

846. CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. The Chairman read the Parish Council notice and announcement in relation to meetings in connection to openness and transparency.
- b. To resolve to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours, if required. Carried.
- c. Other information
 - Councillors were reminded of the CBC Topic Session on 23rd January 6-7pm via MS Teams. The topic covered will be Bedfordshire Employment and Skills Academy (BESA), which will detail their local offer. Anyone wishing to attend should respond to the correspondence circulation by the Clerk.
 - CBC is also promoting a Carbon Literacy Awareness course on Thursday 26th January organised by Groundworks. Anyone wishing to attend should respond to the correspondence circulation by the Clerk.
 - CBC have raised a motion in support of parish councillors, thanking them for the role they do in the community. NALC has also issued a similar message.
 - The crime statistic for Meppershall show 6 reported crimes which is a reduction from the previous month.

847. MEMBERS INTERESTS

- a. To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda and requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests.
Councillor Thompson declared an interest in agenda item 851.d.i and requested that Councillor Parsons chair this part of the meeting.

848. 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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- It is vitally important to retain the Fix My Street reference number for all reported issues as this helps Ward Councillors when requesting more clarity on decisions made by CBC officers.
- CBC 2023-2024 Budget proposals include:
 - No increase in CBC's share of the Council Tax
 - Fire (£5/annum), Police (£15/annum) and Parish Councils may choose to implement increases.
 - No cuts to any services are planned.
 - No change to 2 weekly collections of waste and free garden waste collections will re-start in April 2023.
 - Planned £9 million in efficiency savings.
 - Capital Expenditure of £253 million is included in the proposed budget.
 - An additional £5 million will be invested in Children's services.
 - An additional £1 million will be invested in leisure centres.
 - The proposed budget has a provision of £16 million for inflation costs.
- The contract to build Steppingley Crematorium has been awarded to Spacemaker Developments Ltd, with an 18 month delivery date.
- Ward Councillors have allocated their Community Grant allocation to the Warm Homes programme set up by Shefford Town Council. This will provide for any residents in the ward who need help during this winter. Sites include the STMA, all churches, the Library and the Shefford Town Council Office.

Ward Councillor Liddiard advised the meeting that:

- CBC have allocated £1.4 million to support vulnerable residents, the continuation of provision of free school meals and funding for local foodbanks.
- Funding of up to £10k is available for eligible residents to make their homes more energy efficient. See:
https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/news/article/853/funding_available_to_make_your_home_warmer
- CBC have set up a crisis fund for children's centres. £45k has been set aside for hardship payments to residents who are referred to the NEED project.
- The CBC recycling team have a number of videos on YouTube focussing on what can and cannot be recycled.
- CBC are starting to install EV Charging Points and a bike repair stop is up and running in Shefford.
- CBC are bidding for 'Pocket Parks' funding and wish to develop a site in Shefford off Ivel Road into a small forest / park.
- There are still tree planting grants available from CBC and Ward Councillors still have match funding available for any local community projects.

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

- The potholes on Shefford Road and other roads in the village are now too numerous and are becoming dangerous with some residents making claims against CBC for damages. What can Ward Councillors do to help get them patched or the road re-surfaced? *The Clerk advised that Mrs Thorne has now walked the village and photographed all the potholes she could find in order to log them on Fix-My-Street. ML & AB advised that they would contact Highways Officers with photos provided by Mrs Thorne and request that patching is carried out as soon as possible. The Clerk will be updated on progress made. Council agreed that*

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the Clerk should produce an article for the Messenger to communicate the plan on re-surfacing of Shefford Road, how residents can help with reporting potholes and what to do if a pothole damages their vehicle.

- Vehicles continue to use the Hoo Road bridleway as a cut through from Shefford Road to Chapel Road. Many vehicles end up trying to turn in the entrance to Old Road Meadow and have caused damage to the gate that is now unrepairable. Signage is not adequate. What can be done to help resolve this issue before someone is hurt? *The Clerk advised that the CBC ROW Officer is working towards the installation of a horse gate on the bridleway to stop traffic using it however this will not stop vehicles accessing via Shefford Road or Chapel Road. ML to discuss issue with CBC Highways Officers. MPC to investigate road signage that makes reference to not following Sat Nav directions.*

Standing orders were reinstated at 8:10pm.

849. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 14th November 2022.

A minor amendment was requested and approved to page 38 of the minutes.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 14th November 2022 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.

850. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Procedures - Review and adoption of:

- i. Meeting dates 2023-2024.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that MPC approves the 2023-2024 meetings as amended during the meeting. Carried.

b. Consultations.

- i. To consider response to CBC Budget 2023 consultation.

Councillors noted that no increase was planned in CBC's share of the Council tax and agreed that councillors should respond to the consultation as individuals.

c. IT and Communications.

- i. Update from the Clerk.

Website usage continues to rise. The MPC Dog Fouling campaign is creating chatter on Facebook.

d. Stocken House Green Space.

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

MPC Solicitor is chasing Davidson's for a copy of the final Agreement for MPC approval and signing in addition to confirmation that CBC have approved MPC's adoption of the green space.

e. Wry Close Allotment Track.

- i. To receive update on Sugar Loaf PH use of allotment track for anchoring gazebo (stretch tent).

The Clerk advised that the utility company representatives have advised that MPC land is no longer required for the gas installation at the Sugar Loaf PH as an alternative supply route had been found.

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851. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders.

- i. To approve purchase of bollards for Old Road Meadow and Centenary Field.
The Clerk was asked to investigate alternative suppliers who may be able to provide a bollard. It was noted that 6 bollards are required for installation in MPC owned locations.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to approve cost of 'sturdy' bollards as approved by the Clerk and Cllr Thompson (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.9&10). Carried.

- ii. To approve purchase of signage required in all MPC owned green spaces.
The Clerk advised that signage requirements have been revised and Cllr Standbridge has assisted with design. The Clerk will now issue requests for quotations on supply of signage including posts and other items required and also installation.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that the Clerk action purchase of signage as required by MPC subsequent to receipt of quotations. (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.9&10). Carried.

- iii. To approve cost for installation of signage, bollards and notice boards.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that the Clerk action installation of signage, noticeboards and bollards as required by MPC subsequent to receipt of quotations. (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.9&10). Carried.

- iv. To approve other purchase order requests.

The Clerk advised that Mrs Thorne has requested funding for the purchase of wildflowers to be planted at Old Road Meadow.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved to approve purchase of wildflowers up to £500 (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.9&10). Carried.

b. Document approval.

- i. To approve journal entries, bank reconciliations and bank statements.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve Bank Statements & Reconciliations Current Account 166, 167 & 168, Bank Statements and Reconciliations Savings Account 037 & 038 and MultiPay Card Statements and Reconciliations November to December 2022. 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 a number councillors present at the meeting.

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

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Payment No:	Payee	Purpose	Amount
Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc			
DD02-23	ICO	Data Protection renewal fee (1/1/23)	£35.00
UT-CHARGE	Unity Trust Bank	Qtr 3 Bank Charges	£18.00
DD02-2212	Everflow	Allotment Water 8/1/23-7/12/23	-£12.89
FA01-2212	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (Paid 16/12/22)	
FA02-2212	NEST	EE Pension Contribution	
FA03-2212	NEST	ER Pension Contribution	£52.76
SO01-2212	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (21/12/22)	
DD01-2212A	Standard Life	Additional contribution payment (5/12/22)	£6.50
DD01-2212B	Standard Life	Clerk EE Pension Contribution	£129.35
DD02-2301	Everflow	Allotment Water 8/2/23-7/3/23 (16/1/23)	£12.91
FA01-2301	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (10/01/23)	
FA02-2301	NEST	EE Pension Contribution	
FA03-2301	NEST	ER Pension Contribution	£52.76
SO01-2301	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (16/01/23)	
MultiPay Card Payments - 28/11/2022 Statement - £15.60 paid 12/12/2022			
DD07-2210	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Monthly Mobile Plan	£5.40
DD04-2211	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Monthly Mobile Plan	£7.20
DD06-2211	Lloyds Bank	Monthly Card Charge	£3.00
MultiPay Card Payments - 28/12/2022 Statement - £15.60 to be paid 11/01/2023			
DD07-2211	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Monthly Mobile Plan	£5.40
DD04-2212	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Monthly Mobile Plan	£7.20
DD06-2212	Lloyds Bank	Monthly Card Charge	£3.00
Payment requests received before agenda published			
BACS690	A & B Gardening Ltd	Grass Cuts November	£348.00
BACS691	Fresh Air Fitness	Outdoor Gym	£10,587.30
BACS692	BJ Foster (Plumber)	Phase 1 - Pipe Leaf CF	£229.11
BACS693	Meppershall Village Hall	Room Hire 14/11/22	£36.00
BACS694	AA Sherriff & Son	Pitch grass cutting & maintenance	£9,918.00
BACS695	AA Sherriff & Son	Pitch Herbicide treatment	£216.00
BACS696	AA Sherriff & Son	CF remedial works	£8,783.23
BACS697	AA Sherriff & Son	Amenity area remedial works	£4,224.48
BACS698	AA Sherriff & Son	Water Sprinkler, hose pipes and fittings	£346.47
BACS699	HMRC	Qtr 3 EE NI, ER NI and PAYE	£643.88
BACS700	NSALG	Membership Fee	£66.00
BACS701	SLCC	Membership Fees	£125.29
BACS702	Meppershall Messenger	Messenger inserts	£70.00
BACS703	Lawsons Ltd t/a Southill Sawmills	Allotment wooden stakes	£1,215.00
BACS704	SLCC	Practitioners conference	£95.04

d. 2023-2024 Budget.

- To review and approve Grant Funding applications.

Councillor Thompson handed over chairing to Councillor Parsons.

1. Meppershall Events.

The Clerk had circulated with meeting papers an application from the Meppershall Events Committee who have requested grant funding of £1,500 for the Summer Fair in July 2023. Councillors were delighted to hear that the event was being organised for this year.

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved to approve a grant request from the Meppershall Events Committee for £1,500 for the 2023-2024 financial year payable in April 2023 (Local Government Act 1972, s.145.1.a). Carried.

2. Meppershall Messenger.

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The Clerk had circulated with meeting papers an application from the Meppershall Messenger who have requested grant funding of £750.

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved to approve a grant request from the Meppershall Messenger for £750 for the 2023-2024 financial year payable in April 2023 (Local Government Act 1972, s.142). Carried.

- ii. To consider celebration of King's Coronation and any budget required.

Councillors discussed how MPC and the village may wish to celebrate the King's Coronation in May whilst recognising that MPC does not have the means to organise an event on their own. The Clerk was asked to look at the cost of providing children in Meppershall schools with a gift and to set aside a sum of £1,500 in the 2023-2024 budget for Coronation event spend.

- iii. To consider annual maintenance contract of gym equipment with supplier.

The Clerk has been provided with a Maintenance Service Agreement by the suppliers of the outdoor gym equipment at a cost of £686.46. The agreement includes an operational inspection and service to cover the year starting from the date of the initial maintenance agreement order and incorporates:

- Full inspection of equipment and an assessment of condition and safety.
- Replacement of faulty, missing and damaged parts that come within the terms of the agreement.
- Replacement of operational items damaged by wear and tear (limiters, bearings, handles etc.).
- Minor cosmetic repairs (scratches, some graffiti, labels, touch-up etc.)
- Full written report on state and safety of equipment and the work that has been carried out, and any further work needed.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to approve Maintenance Service Agreement with Fresh Air Fitness for 2023-2024 subsequent to Clerk assessing other similar quotations and option to cost share with Gravenhurst Parish Council (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s.19). Carried.

- iv. To review and approve 2023-2024 budget.

Deferred to Extra-Ordinary meeting to be held on Monday 16th January at 10am in the Village Hall.

e. 2023-2024 Precept.

- i. To review and approve 2023-2024 precept request.

Deferred to Extra-Ordinary meeting to be held on Monday 16th January at 10am in the Village Hall.

852. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration.

- i. CB/22/04621/FULL - Land at Hoo Farm, Chapel Road - Change of use from a caravan storage area to an area for general B8 storage.

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 22/04621 on the grounds of highways issues, health and safety and character and landscape, and that a request be made for the removal of permitted development rights if the planning application is approved. Carried.

- ii. CB/22/04655/FULL - 11 Coneygate, SG17 5GB - Proposed single storey infill extension and first floor rear extension.

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Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council has no comment on planning application 22/04655. Carried.

- iii. CB/TRE/22/00658 - 84 Shefford Road, SG17 5LL - Works to a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order: (MB/99/00008/T1) - Quercus Robur (English Oak) - 25% reduction of canopy, shape & balance crown where appropriate. Crown lift to 5m over carriageway. Removal of all deadwood within canopy (T1).

Proposed Cllr Chapman/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application TRE/22/00658 due to concerns regarding the extent of the proposed works and the effect they will have on the Oak Tree if they are all conducted at the same time. Carried.

b. Update on applications responded to by the Clerk using delegated powers.

The Clerk provided the following update on planning applications responded to using delegated powers:

- i. CB/22/04178/FULL - The Pigling, Shefford Road, SG17 5LL - Erection of a detached dwelling, a detached double garage, a detached single garage with a store/workshop and parking.

The Clerk submitted an objection based on character and appearance of the site, noise and disturbance and lack of consultation with neighbours. A request for conditions to be included on permitted development rights was included should CBC be minded to grant the planning application.

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.

853. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

Nothing to report.

854. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. OPCC and RMF grant funding update.

The Clerk provided the following update:

- Gateway, VAS and 40mph buffer installation planned for 2nd December but date changed to January 9th start.
- Confirmation received from the PCC that the funding commitment will continue, despite the delays to deliver the scheme.

b. Participation in Pan-Bedfordshire Bus Users' Forum.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Chapman. Resolved that the Council link into this initiative via the Meppershall Wanderbus. Carried.

c. Proposal for road safety improvements on new developments – Cllr Seaman

Councillor Seaman proposed approaching developers of sites in Meppershall, namely Bovis and Davidsons Homes to see if they would be willing to erect 20mph signage within their sites to assist with road safety as Croudace Homes have done in Walnut tree Way.

Proposed Cllr Seaman/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved Councillor Seaman approach developers of new sites in Meppershall regarding 20mph zones on their sites. Carried.

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855. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Centenary Field

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

The Clerk reported that Sherriffs have completed all their works except verti-draining and over seeding of the outfield which will be completed by Sherriffs in the spring.

Mrs Thorne provided positive feedback on the grass within the fenced off area and suggested that the heras fencing could be removed. Councillors agreed that the Clerk and Mrs Thorne would organise a working party one weekend before the school half term pending good weather conditions to remove all the heras fencing.

- ii. Update on gym installation and any actions required.

The Clerk reported that the metal labels have now all been fitted and no other installation snagging is outstanding.

b. Update on allotment renewals.

The Clerk advised that circa £600 is still due in allotment rent and that she is chasing this.

c. Update on Dog Fouling campaign

The Clerk advised that the dog fouling campaign is going well with Facebook posts now starting to instigate online chatter about the issue. Our request for more dog bins is pending as is signage. The Dog Wardens are visiting the village more frequently. A local resident is leaving dog poo bags for others to use attached to the pitch fencing.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to purchase dog poo bags and dispensers up to £50 (Litter Act 1983, ss.5-6). Carried

856. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:25pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be the 13th February 2023, starting at 7pm 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