

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 15TH MAY 2023

PRESENT: **Councillors:** Thompson (Chair), Addy, Merryweather, Morgan, Parsons, Seaman, Standbridge and Wright. (Later Avrili and Russell).

The Clerk: A Marabese.

Others: Ward Councillor Stephenson, and 5 members of the public.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:00pm.

899. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN / VICE-CHAIRMAN

a. Election of the Chairman for the year 2023-2024

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to elect Councillor Thompson as Chairman for the year 2023-2024. Carried.

b. Receipt of Chairman Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Councillor Thompson signed the Chairman Declaration of Acceptance of Office before the Proper Officer and Clerk of the Council.

900. ELECTION OF VICE - CHAIRMAN

a. Election of the Vice - Chairman for the year 2023-2024

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to elect Councillor Parsons as Vice - Chairman for the year 2023-2024. Carried.

b. Receipt of Vice - Chairman Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Councillor Parsons signed the Vice - Chairman Declaration of Acceptance of Office before the Proper Officer and Clerk of the Council.

901. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

a. None – all councillors present.

902. CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

a. The Chairman read the Parish Council notice and announcement in relation to openness, transparency, and respect during meetings.

b. To resolve to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours. Carried.

c. Update on Annual Parish Meeting held on 24th April 2023.

The Chairman reported that it was a pleasant surprise to see so many attendees and presentations submitted which are all included in the draft minutes published on the MPC website. Issues raised during discussions included signage, bus routes, construction, and state of the roads.

d. Other information

- Attended the CPRE AGM on 26th April and will circulate the presentation given to councillors. CPRE is an organisation that supports MPC with advice and knowledge especially on matters concerning planning and the environment.
- The crime statistics for Meppershall in April show 10 reported incidents including several attempted break ins.
- Reminder given to all councillors to complete their Register of Interests on the CBC website (link provided by the Clerk) and to ensure that the Expenses forms are completed and sent to the CBC Electoral team.

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- CBC Ward Councillor elections returned 27 Independents, 20 Conservatives, 10 Liberal Democrats, 5 Labour, and 1 Green Party members. No party has an overall majority however the Independents will be asked to form an administration. The next CBC Full Council meeting will be on 25th May.
- Congratulations were offered to Ward Councillor Blake Stephenson who have been elected as ward councillor for the Meppershall, Shillington and Gravenhurst Ward.
- Beds PCC has reported that Beds Police numbers have increased by nearly 200.
- The Clerk has advised that the 100 High Street planning appeal hearing will be held on 27th and 28th June.

903. MEMBERS INTERESTS

- a. To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda and requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests.
No interests declared and no requests for dispensation received.

904. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:15pm) the Chairman suspended Standing Orders to receive reports from our Ward Councillor, 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 Stephenson advised the meeting that:

- Thanks were offered to all for his election as Ward Councillor.
- CBC Election Results – As explained by the Chairman the Independents will be given the first opportunity to form an administration and to appoint both portfolio holders and committee positions. Due to no party having an overall majority the dynamics at CBC will change for both CBC officers and elected councillors. The full council meeting on 25th May will be the key to the future four years.
- Current Focus - Former Meppershall Ward Councillors Brown and Liddiard have not disappeared and are working with Councillor Stephenson in the background. A list of 'issues' to deal with has been provided to Councillor Stephenson to deal with and this includes the VAS installation on Shefford Road. It is also hoped that there can be a greater working relationship between the villages in the Ward (Meppershall, Shillington and Gravenhurst).
- Tidy Tips – A programme of maintenance at CBC owned Tidy Tips is planned over the summer with each Tidy Tip closed at different times.
- Community Asset Grants – Bidding to start soon.

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

- There are giant hogweed infestations visible on roadsides, what is CBC's policy regarding removal? *Cllr Stephenson to investigate and advise the Clerk.*
- Why was MPC not consulted on the permanent location of Meppershall Academy Year 5 and Year 6 children on the Henlow Academy site in Henlow? *Cllr Stephenson to investigate and advise the Clerk.*

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:30pm.

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905. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 17th April 2023.

Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 17th April 2023 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.

906. CO-OPTION

- a. To consider co-option requests received

The Clerk advised that there were currently two vacant councillors' seats, and that two expressions of interests in co-option forms had been received and circulated to councillors with meeting papers. The two individuals interested in co-option, Mr Philip Russell, and Mrs Roma Avrili were both present at the meeting.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved to co-opt Mr Philip Russell as Councillor to Meppershall Parish Council. Carried.

Mr Russell signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office before the Proper Officer and Clerk of the Council and was then asked to join the meeting by the Chairman.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to co-opt Mrs Roma Avrili as Councillor to Meppershall Parish Council. Carried.

Mrs Avrili signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office before the Proper Officer and Clerk of the Council and was then asked to join the meeting by the Chairman.

907. DELEGATION ARRANGEMENTS

- a. To appoint Personnel Committee members.

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved to appoint Cllrs Addy, Parson, Merryweather and if required Thompson to the Personnel Committee. Carried.

- b. To appoint Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group members.

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved to appoint Cllrs Parsons and Standbridge to the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group. Carried

- c. To appoint representative and trustee to Meppershall Village Hall Committee.

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved to re-appoint Cllr Thompson as representative and trustee to Meppershall Village Hall Committee. Carried

- d. To appoint Spokesmen and members to the following Working Groups:

- i. Environment and Leisure.
- ii. Planning and Housing.
- iii. Highways and Transport.
- iv. Finance Working Group.
- v. Community Safety and Risk Management.
- vi. Procedures and Legal.
- vii. IT.
- viii. Defibrillator Inspectors.

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Environment & Leisure working group	CLlr Morgan - Spokesman	Clerk
	CLlr Merryweather	Environment & Community Officer
	CLlr Addy	Mrs R Cooper-Keeble
Planning & Housing working group	CLlr Thompson - Spokesman	Clerk
	CLlr Russell	Mr Peter Crossley
Highways & Transport working group	CLlr Seaman - Spokesman	Clerk
	CLlr Morgan	
Finance working group	CLlr Wright - Spokesman	Clerk
	CLlr Parsons	
	CLlr Thompson	
Community Safety & Risk Management working group (includes Neighbourhood Watch and Policing)	CLlr Wright - Risk Spokesman	Clerk
	CLlr Seaman - Community Safety Spokesman	
Procedures & Legal working group	CLlr Thompson	Clerk - Spokesman
	CLlr Avrili	
	CLlr Parsons	
IT working group	CLlr Standbridge - Spokesman	Clerk
Defibrillator Inspector	CLlr Parsons	
	CLlr Addy	

Proposed CLlr Addy/Seconded CLlr Seaman. Resolved to appoint spokesmen and members to working groups as above. Carried.

908. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Procedures

- i. Code of Conduct
Proposed CLlr Standbridge/Seconded CLlr Seaman. Resolved to re-approve MPC Code of Conduct v3.0. Carried.
- ii. Dispensation Guidance and Form
Proposed CLlr Standbridge/Seconded CLlr Seaman. Resolved to re-approve MPC Dispensation Guidance and Form v2.0. Carried.
- iii. Co-option Policy and Form
Proposed CLlr Standbridge/Seconded CLlr Seaman. Resolved to re-approve MPC Co-option Policy v1.0 and Form v2.0. Carried.
- iv. Engagement with Developers
Proposed CLlr Standbridge/Seconded CLlr Seaman. Resolved to re-approve MPC Engagement with Developers v1.1. Carried.
- v. Financial Regulations
Proposed CLlr Standbridge/Seconded CLlr Seaman. Resolved to re-approve MPC Financial Regulations v3.3. Carried.
- vi. Standing Orders
Proposed CLlr Merryweather/Seconded CLlr Morgan. Resolved to re-approve MPC Standing Orders v5.0 with removal of item 5.10 restricting consecutive years served as Chairman. Carried.
Councillors wished it noted that the change to Standing Orders was not an obligation on the current Chairman to continue in his role with MPC.
- vii. Personnel Committee Terms of Reference

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Proposed Cllr Standbridge/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved to re-approve MPC Personnel Committee Terms of Reference v1.1. Carried.

viii. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee Terms of Reference

Proposed Cllr Standbridge/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved to re-approve MPC Neighbourhood Plan Terms of Reference v2.1. Carried.

b. Honorary Freeman (or Honorary Freewoman of the Parish.

i. To consider nomination received.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to confer the title of Honorary Freeman of the Parish of Meppershall to Mr Peter Chapman in recognition of his 30 plus years' service to the parish as councillor/chairman and core member of several village organisations providing services to residents, and that the Clerk order the appropriate scroll for the presentation (to take place at the Summer Fayre on 1st July 2023). Carried.

c. Invitations

i. Attendance at Area 5 Community Policing - Parishes Working Together Meeting - Tuesday 16th May - 11am

Clerk to attend with Councillors Seaman and Thompson attending the Area 5 Priorities setting meeting on 20th June

d. IT and Communications

i. Update from the Clerk.

A report on website usage was circulated to councillors at the beginning of the month. Councillor Standbridge reported that there had been 828 website views in April and that email accounts of retiring councillors have been restricted.

e. Stocken House Green Space

i. Approval of Agreement with Davidson Homes for future handover of Green Open Space at Stocken House / Woodland Rest.

The Chairman advised that after months of negotiations, the Clerk and our Solicitors have finally had communication from Davidson Homes and their solicitors regarding the final agreement and maps to accompany them.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to approve agreement with Davidson Homes for future hand over of green open space 'The Glebe' at Stocken House / Woodlands Rest. Carried.

f. MPC Crackle Hill Track / Driveway

i. To receive update on works carried out by Anglian Water to remove non-authorise utilities from MPC land and agree on any actions required.

Upon inspection on 17th April the Clerk found that utilities for water had not been moved (only meters). Clerk wrote to Anglian Water and met with representative of the Connections Team on site on 26th April who said they would provide details of how to move the pipe line and meters to Anglian Water for approval. Contact made with AW Connections Customer Service team who have kept the Clerk updated on progress. Site visit to take place on 15th May with works planned for w/c 22nd May. The Clerk has agreed to issue signage closing our Crackle Hill permissive driveway. Councillor Thompson and Mrs Thorne will observe works whilst the Clerk is away.

909. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders.

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- i. To approve purchase order requests.

1. Bench oil
2. Printer ink
3. Freedom scroll

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Standbridge. Resolved to purchase bench oil, printer ink and freedom scroll. Carried.

b. Budget v Actual

- i. To receive 2022-2023 budget v actual reports and consider any amendments required to 2023-2024 budget.

The Clerk provided reports on the previous financial year budget v actual which were noted. No changes were made to the 2023-2024 budget.

c. Asset Register

- i. Review of asset register.

The Clerk presented the current Asset Register to councillors for review and its' contents were noted.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Morgan. Resolved the Councillor Wright assist the Clerk and Mrs Thorne to conduct a physical audit of all assets, record with pictures and log the location with mapping software. Carried

d. Reserves

- i. Review and approval of adjustment to Earmarked Reserves.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to approve Reserves for 2023/2024 as proposed by the Clerk with Defib reserve increased to £2.5k and Locum Clerk reserve increased by additional £3k . Carried

2022/2023	2023/2024	
cf	Recommend ed Start Position	Movement
£ -	£ -	£ -
£ 8,500	£ 8,500	£ -
£ 1,650	£ 1,650	£ -
£ 6,000	£ 6,000	£ -
£ 3,250	£ 3,250	£ -
£ 37,000	£ 37,000	£ -
£ 3,266	£ 3,266	-£ 1,441
£ 1,850	£ 1,850	£ -
£ 6,000	£ 6,000	£ 3,000
£ 20,000	£ 20,000	£ -
£ 5,017	£ 5,017	£ -
£ 1,465	£ 1,465	£ 1,035
£ 93,998	£ 93,998	£ 2,594

e. Internal Auditor report

- i. To receive report and any associated action plan.

The Chairman expressed thanks to the Clerk for having received an Internal Auditor Report without issues.

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Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to receive the Internal Auditor Report on 2022-2023 and note that no issues were identified. Carried

f. Annual Governance Statement 2022/2023

- i. To approve the Governance Statement for submission to the External Auditor.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to approve the Governance Statement 2022/2023 as circulated for submission to the External Auditor and that it be signed by the Clerk and Chairman of the meeting. Carried

g. Accounting Statements 2022/2023

- i. To approve the Accounting Statements for submission to the External Auditor.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to approve the Accounting Statements 2022/2023 as presented to council by the Responsible Financial Officer (& Clerk) for submission to the External Auditor and that it be signed by the Chairman of the meeting. Carried

h. Exercise of Public Rights to Inspect MPC Accounts

- i. To receive details of the dates set for the exercise of public rights.
Councillors noted the dates set by the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer regarding the exercise of public rights to inspect MPC accounts as 12th June 2023 to 21st July 2023 inclusive.

i. Banking Mandate

- i. To approve banking mandate changes - removing old councillors, adding new and updating permissions accordingly.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the clerk action the following changes to the MPC banking mandate: remove Mr Crossley and Mr Chapman, add Councillors Avrili and Russell, provide Councillor Wright with online add and approve rights. Carried
Councillor Wright was also asked if he could investigate appropriate savings accounts that MPC could transfer funds to for review at the next meeting.

j. Document approval.

- i. To approve journal entries, bank reconciliations and bank statements.
Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve Bank Statements & Reconciliations Current Account 173, Bank Statements and Reconciliations Savings Account 042 and Journals 79 and 80. Carried.

k. 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 two councillors present at the meeting.
Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the schedules of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment by Councillor Thompson and or Councillor Parsons. Carried.

Payment No:	Payee	Purpose	Amount	MultiPay Card
Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc				
DD01-2305	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (15/05/2023)		
DD02-2305	Everflow	Allotment Water 8/6/23-7/7/23 (16/5/23)	£38.23	
FA01-2305	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (10/05/23)		
FA02-2305	NEST	EE Pension Contribution		
FA03-2305	NEST	ER Pension Contribution		
SO01-23045	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (15/05/23)		
DD04-2304	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Monthly Mobile Plan (19/04/2023)	£7.20	Yes
DD06-2304	Lloyds Bank	Monthly MultiPay Card Charge (26/04/23)	£3.00	Yes

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DD07-2303	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Monthly Mobile Plan (28/04/23)	£5.40	Yes
BACS741	Sheldon Electricals	Purchase grant - TV for MSC (25/04/23)	£569.99	
BACS748	Amazon EU Sarl	Cordless Sander, rubber mallet	£171.22	Yes
BACS749	Jenolite (UK) Lytd	Rust Spray	£18.99	Yes
BACS750	Independent Car Components Ltd	Spay Lube	£11.77	Yes
BACS751	TGL Mailing Ltd	Cordless Drill	£105.99	Yes
BACS755	Wilko Retail	Plastic Wallets	£6.40	Yes
Payment requests received before agenda published				
BACS739	CPRE Bedfordshire	Grant funding (Approved 13.04.2023)	£500.00	
BACS740	Meppershall Social Club	Grant funding (Approved 13.04.2023)	£400.00	
BACS742	Groundworks UK	Unspent NP grant return	£1,441.00	
BACS743	MVI Corporate Merchandise Ltd	Coronation Mugs	£1,316.40	
BACS744	Mrs V Thorne	Expenses - Petrol and bin bags	£26.51	
BACS745	Meppershall Village Hall	Room hire 17/04/23	£36.00	
BACS746	A& B Gardening Ltd	Grass Cutting April 2023	£2,130.00	
BACS747	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	Alpha Software Licence and Support	£183.78	
BACS752	Ross Williams Solicitors Ltd	Legal Costs - Stocken Land Transfer	£1,800.00	
BACS753	Ross Williams Solicitors Ltd	Land Registry Fees - Stocken Land transfer	£55.20	
BACS754	Auditing Solutions Ltd	Internal Audit	£468.00	

910. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration.

- i. CB/23/00761/FULL - Sandy View, Shefford Road, SG17 5LL - Erection of 3no dwellings following demolition of 1 existing dwelling.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 23/00761. Carried.
- ii. CB/23/01183/VOC - Former site of New Close Nurseries, Fildyke Road - Variation (or removal) of condition number 12 of planning permission CB/17/02409/FULL (Demolition of existing glasshouses and redevelopment with 10 residential dwellings and all ancillary works). Variation sought to remove the condition to build the footpath.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 23/01183/VOC. Carried.
- iii. CB/23/01180/VOC - Former site of Tower View Nurseries, Fildyke Road - Variation (or removal) of condition number 5 of planning permission CB/18/04569/FULL (Demolition of existing greenhouses and redevelopment with 9 residential dwellings including new access and all ancillary works.) Variation sought to remove the condition to build the footpath.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 23/01180/VOC. Carried.

b. Appeals

- i. APP/P0240/D/23/3314857 - CB/22/02025/FULL - Standalone House – Meppershall Airfield, SG17 5PB - Two storey side extension to form an annexe in connection with the existing dwelling. Information only as this appeal is proceeding under the Householder Appeals Service and there is no opportunity for MPC to submit further comments.
Councillors notes the appeal process.

911. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

The Clerk is progressing with this.

912. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. OPCC and RMF grant funding and works update including dispute raised with CBC regarding invoice received for part of the works.

The Clerk advised that CBC contractors had installed the VAS on Shefford Road on 11th May however they had not removed the bend right sign in front of it, so the VAS is obscured (pictures forwarded to MPC and CBC). This issue was raised with CBC by the Clerk immediately as it was obvious that this would be an issue of ridicule raised by our residents – Facebook posts were seen about it on Friday evening. CBC have advised that they will resolve the issue ASAP.

The Clerk has also received a 7-day notice for payment as per the invoice previously received from CBC. As works are not yet completed and details pending from CBC on invoicing cost, the Clerk has advised CBC that the invoice is in dispute pending their response. The Clerk confirmed that she has never received quotations from CBC for the works, despite requesting them, and had never issued a purchase order for the works. *Proposed Cllr Parson/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Clerk does not make payment of the CBC Highways invoice as issues and that the Clerk and Chairman seek to resolve the matter with the CBC Highways team. Carried.*

b. Update on road safety improvements on new developments – Cllr Seaman.

Councillor Seaman is awaiting an update from Davidsons.

c. Update of Fix My Street reports – Cllr Seaman.

Councillor Seaman is making between 2 to 5 submissions every on Fix My Street. It has taken more than 4 weeks to fix signage and 3 separate reports on fix My Street to get the Shillington Road VAS working.

913. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Update on maintenance works

The Clerk has previously issued a purchase order for the installation of fencing at the far end of the copse on Centenary Field and another for the installation of the replacement gate and bollard at Old Road Meadow, notice boards and reinstallation of the bollard on the Crackle Hill driveway. Some works have been completed but others are pending. *Clerk to chase.*

914. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:15pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be the 12th June 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
- MPC = Meppershall Parish Council
- MVH = Meppershall Village Hall & MVHT = Meppershall Village Hall Trustees
- NP = Neighbourhood Plan
- ORM = Old Read Meadow Nature Reserve

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- PCC = Bedfordshire Police Crime Commissioner
- VAS = Vehicle Activated Sign