

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 2023

PRESENT: **Councillors:** Parsons (Chair), Addy, Avrili, Merryweather, Russell, Seaman and Wright
 The Clerk: A Marabese.
 Others: Ward Councillor Stephenson and 3 members of the public.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:15pm.

941. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Councillor Standbridge provided apologies that were accepted.

942. 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. Other information
 - The Chairman asked the Clerk if she knew of any other Village Hall hirers who were having issues entering booked rooms. Tonight's meeting was the second meeting in a row for MPC where keys for the room could not be found and the meeting start delayed. The room was also not cleared for the meeting further delaying the start time. *The Clerk was asked to contact MVHT to express displeasure.*
 - Councillor Merryweather will be attending the National Allotment Society Eastern Region AGM on 14th October on MPC behalf.

943. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

944. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:18pm) 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:

- CBC Strategic Priorities – New Independent administration are reviewing these.
- Schools for the Future - Update expected in the autumn.
- 100 High Street Planning Appeal – Refusal of the appeal was a good outcome.
- CBC Highways – The 2023/24 Annual Plan has been published with a lack of work scheduled for Meppershall. Not even the Brookmead and Brookside footpaths are included. Discussions ongoing with Highways. *Councillor Stephenson, Councillor Seaman and the Clerk to work together on Highways issues requiring CBC action.*
- Local Plan – A full review will be starting after approval of Full Council post October 2023.
- CBC Fees and Charges – An increase to CBC fees and charges has been proposed with increases above the rate of inflation. The proposals require CBC Executive approval before implementation.

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

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- Regarding 100 High Street, is it possible to have a summary of the Planning Inspectors report written in layman's language? *Councillor Stephenson to request this from the Planning Officer involved.*
- Where is CBC Highways money being spent? *Councillor Stephenson – The information is available online with strategic projects listed by village / town. The plan is very officer led and councillors are requesting more involvement.*
- Is it possible to make a complaint about the lack of Highways action in our village? *The Chairman reminded everyone that during this part of the meeting no decisions can be made by Council and therefore this should be an agenda item for our next meeting.*
- Can MPC please not forget re-surfacing of Shefford Road? *This will not be forgotten.*
- Residents have asked members of the Messenger delivery team who in MPC does what? *The Chairman advised that the proper channel for all communication with the Council is via the Clerk but that membership of working groups and committees is shown on our website.*
- A tree was removed by CBC contractors on Fowlers Drive but the stump is still there despite contractors advising they would be back to deal with it in a week. *The Clerk will chase CBC.*
- Individuals on electric bicycles and scooters are speeding through the village and have been seen using the track around the pitch on Centenary Field as a race track. They are covering their faces with black masks. Can the Parish Council do anything about this? *The Clerk reported that she has run into these individuals on Centenary Field and advised them that motorised and electric vehicles / scooters were not permitted on the field. Please pass any information of anti-social behaviour on to the Clerk and she will pass on to the relevant authorities.*
- Has the Council found a replacement for Mrs Thorne? *No not yet but Mrs Thorne will be staying with the Council as Allotment Co-ordinator.*

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:40pm.

945. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 24th July 2023.
Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 24th July 2023 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.

946. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Co-option

- i. To consider any co-option requests received.
No interest in co-option received. Clerk asked to re-advertise in the Messenger and online.

b. Invitations

- i. To confirm attendance at Area 5 Police Priority Setting meeting at Shefford Town Hall, Shefford on Monday 18th September, 11am.
It was agreed that Councillor Parsons will attend.
- ii. To confirm attendance at PCC Annual Parish Council Conference at The Forest Centre, Station Road, Marston Moretaine on Wednesday 11th October, 7pm to 9pm.
It was agreed that Councillor Addy will attend.

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- iii. To confirm attendance at BATPC 2023 AGM at The Rufus Centre, Flitwick on Wednesday 18th October, 7pm for 7:30pm.

It was agreed that the Clerk and Councillor Wright will attend.

- iv. To confirm attendance at Remembrance Day Service on 12th November and laying of wreath on behalf of Parish Council.

It was agreed that Councillor Parsons will attend.

c. Procedures

- i. To re-approve (no changes proposed):

1. MPC Asset Register Policy.
2. MPC Dealing with Complaints Policy
3. MPC Dealing with Habitual and Vexatious Complaints Policy
4. MPC Equality and Diversity Policy

Proposed Cllr Russell/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved that MPC Asset Register, MPC Dealing with Complaints, MPC Dealing with Habitual and Vexatious Complaints Policy and Equality and Diversity Policy are re-approved. Carried.

d. IT and Communications

- i. Update from the Clerk.

A report on website usage was circulated to councillors at the beginning of the month. The Clerk advised all IT issues are up to date and the renewal of the Gov.uk domain name is on the payments lists for approval. The Clerk and Councillor Standbridge have a 'nice to do' list that they will work through when time allows.

947. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders.

- i. To approve purchase order requests.

1. SLCC National Conference attendance by Clerk.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to book SLCC Clerks National Conference (Local Government Act 1972 s.111) if Clerk can attend. Carried.

2. New phone and SIM for Community and Environment Officer.

Proposed Cllr Seaman/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase new phone and SIM for Community and Environment Officer (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

3. All other purchase orders.

- a. To repair play area gate and fill large gaps in wet pour - £400+VAT.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to arrange repair of play area gate and wet pour (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10). Carried.

- b. To approve councillor training courses as required.

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to approve councillor training as required (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

- c. To consider supporting Village Hall opening early on Sundays to provide facilities to football pitch users.

The Clerk advised that the Village Hall does not usually open on Sundays until 12noon. The Village Hall could open earlier however this would need to be supported financially to start with.

Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Seaman. Resolved to approve financial support for Village Hall in opening early for pitch hirers and to review situation

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after 6 weeks. (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19). Carried.

- d. To approve purchase of 5-a-side goals and installation.

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to purchase of 5-a-side goals and installation on main Centenary Field. (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19). Carried.

- e. To approve purchase of new locks and keys for pitch.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the Clerk purchase new locks keyed alike with master key. (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19). Carried.

b. MPC Insurance

- i. To consider new 3 year long term agreement for insurance from 3 supplier quotations. The Clerk and Councillor Wright had reviewed quotations from 3 providers for a 3 year long terms agreement and provided a summary of the comparison to councillors. Councillors chose to select supplier A but requested that the Clerk and Councillor Wright find a company who can provide a standalone policy to cover the cost of the Clerks salary if they were to be ill for a substantial length of time.

Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved that the Council insure themselves for a 3 year LTA with BHIB (Local Government Act 1972 s.111 and s.140) and that the Clerk arrange payment of the £996.40 premium. Carried.

c. Grant Request

- i. To consider grant request from new Meppershall Munchkins for £500.

The Clerk advised that Meppershall Munchkins are a new baby and toddler group run by villagers for the local community. As a recently formed organisation they are yet to set up their bank account etc. but are working with MVHT on this new initiative. The clerk further advised that if Council were minded to allow the grant, funding would come from general reserves.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase and gift items required by Meppershall Munchkins (Local Government Act 1972 s.137) up to cost of £500.00 +VAT. Carried.

d. Document approval.

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

Proposed Cllr Russell/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to approve Bank Statements & Reconciliations Current Account 176, 177 and 178/ and Bank Statements, Reconciliations Savings Account 044, 045 and 046 and MultiPay Statement and Reconciliation 26/06/23 and 26/07/23. Carried.

e. 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 Parsons/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved that the schedules of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment by 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 | | | |
| DD01-2309* | Standard Life | Clerk ER Pension Contribution (11/09/2023) | £129.35 |
| DD01-2308 | Standard Life | Clerk ER Pension Contribution (14/08/2023) | £129.35 |
| SD01-2309 | A Marabese | Monthly Salary (15/09/23) | |
| SD01-2308 | A Marabese | Monthly Salary (15/08/23) | |
| FA01-2308 | Mrs V Thorne | Salary (11/08/23) | |
| FA02-2308 | NEST | EE Pension Contribution | |
| FA03-2308 | NEST | ER Pension Contribution | £53.32 |
| FA01-2309 | Mrs V Thorne | Salary (08/09/23) | |
| FA02-2309 | NEST | EE Pension Contribution | |
| FA03-2309 | NEST | ER Pension Contribution | £50.44 |
| DD02-2309 | Everflow | Allotment Water 8/10/23-7/11/23 | -£415.87 |
| DD02-2308 | Everflow | Allotment Water 8/9/23-7/10/23 | -£540.59 |
| DD06-2308 | Lloyds Bank | Multipay monthly charge (29/08/23) | £3.00 |
| DD06-2307 | Lloyds Bank | Multipay monthly charge (26/07/23) | £3.00 |
| DD06-2306 | Lloyds Bank | Multipay monthly charge (26/06/23) | £3.00 |
| DD04-2308 | Smarty Mobile | Clerk Monthly Mobile Plan (19/08/2023) | £7.20 |
| DD07-2308 | Smarty Mobile | Env Officer Monthly Mobile Plan (28/08/23) | £5.40 |
| DD07-2307 | Smarty Mobile | Env Officer Monthly Mobile Plan (28/07/23) | £5.40 |
| BACS768 | SLCC Enterprises | Clerk Finance Summit training | £72.00 |
| BACS769 | Neighbourhood Watch Network | NW Marketing material | £135.55 |
| BACS772 | Austen Group Ltd t/a Binliners.co.uk | Black bin bags | £36.00 |
| BACS782 | Amazon - JDS DIY LTD | White Spirit | £8.56 |
| BACS783 | Amazon - Govableties Limited | Barrier Tape | £11.87 |
| BACS784 | Amazon - Valley Finishes Ltd | Bristle Brush | £7.33 |
| BACS785 | Amazon - NGL Nordic A/S | Wood Oil | £32.95 |
| BACS786 | Amazon - NGL Nordic A/S | Wood Oil | £32.95 |
| BACS787 | Amazon EU Sarl | Ryobi Cordless Sander | -£56.99 |
| BACS788 | Amazon EU Sarl | Wireless USB adapter | £20.98 |
| Payment requests received before agenda published | | | |
| BACS770 | Central Bedfordshire Council | Uncontested Election charges | £90.33 |
| BACS771 | The Community Heartbeat Trust (Solution) | Replacement defib battery | £354.00 |
| BACS773 | A&B Gardening Limited | July Grass Cuts | £1,854.00 |
| BACS774 | Meppershall Village Hall | Meeting room hire (24/07/23) | £36.00 |
| BACS775 | Krystal Hosting Ltd | Gov.uk domain renewal - 2 years | £96.00 |
| BACS776 | A&B Gardening Limited | August Grass Cuts | £1,572.00 |
| BACS777 | HMRC | Qtr 2 AYE, EE NI & EE NI | £457.28 |
| Payment requests received after agenda published | | | |
| BACS778 | Mid Beds Locksmiths Limited | Allotment Lock and welding | £189.12 |
| BACS779 | Unity Trust Bank | Qtr 2 Banking Charge | £18.00 |
| BACS781 | Central Bedfordshire Council | RMF Schemes | £20,746.00 |
| BACS780 | Central Bedfordshire Council | VAS Match Funding | £2,500.00 |

948. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration.

- CB/23/02838/FULL - 65 Fildyke Road, SG17 5LU - Proposed two storey front and two storey rear extensions.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 23/02838 pending Clerk review. Carried.

- CB/23/02675/FULL - 114 Fildyke Road, SG17 5LU - Erection of two detached dwellings. *Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 23/02675. Carried.*

b. Applications responded to under delegated powers – For information only.

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- i. CB/23/02452/FULL - Sandy View, Shefford Road, SG17 5LL - Demolition of existing bungalow and erection of a four bed dwelling. *Objection submitted.*
- ii. CB/23/02413/FULL - 59 Fildyke Road - SG17 5LU - Erection of a detached double garage to front of dwelling. *Objection submitted.*

c. Appeals

- i. CB/22/01261/OUT – APP/P0240/W/23/3317603 - 100 High Street, SG17 5LZ - Development of 23 dwellings and associated works following the demolition of 100 High Street with all matters reserved except access. Appeal dismissed although it was noted that the Inspector noted CBC's 5 year forward housing land supply at 5.01 years.
- ii. CB/22/02025/FULL - Standalone House, Campton Road, SG17 5PB - Two storey side extension. Appeal granted with conditions.

949. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

The Clerk is progressing with slowly. A meeting of the NP Steering Group was requested.

- b.** To consider request to write to local MP regarding Planning Inspectorate decision on APP/P3420/W/23/3314808 where the adopted Neighbourhood Plan has been given limited weight in the decision making process.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the Mr Pain be asked to write directly to The Rt. Hon. Michael Gove the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in support of Neighbourhood Plans. Carried.

950. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. Update on dispute raised with CBC regarding invoice received highways works.

The Clerk reported that revised invoices have been received from CBC as requested that formed part of the payment list already approved by councillors. The matter is now considered closed.

b. Update on road safety improvements on new developments

Councillor Seaman reported that Vistry Homes (Emery Gardens) have erected 20mph signage but that is it just one small sign. Councillor Seaman is awaiting an update from Davidsons and CBC regarding Woodlands Rest. *The Clerk was asked to email Davidsons regarding this again.*

Elsewhere the VAS on Shillington Road has been re-installed, however the bollards outside the Village Stores are not yet in place.

951. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Update on dog fouling campaign and issues arising.

New FaceBook and Social media posts have been prepared by the Clerk and will be scheduled for publication shortly. The Clerk is ordering bags for the new dog fouling dispenser on the PC Stores. Councillor Avrili has reported that dog fouling on Centenary Field is seemingly better but she and other residents are constantly picking up other dogs mess. The Council wished to thank residents for cleaning up after other irresponsible dog owners and hoped that improvements would also be seen elsewhere in the village, especially Old Road Meadow.

- b. To consider participation or commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of D-Day on 6th June 2024.**

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Councillors agreed that a funding for marking the 80th Anniversary of D-Day in June 20254 would be set aside in the 2024-2025 budget that village organisations could request access to via grant funding.

c. To consider signing up to I Dig Trees free tree giveaway.

Councillors agreed that an application for trees was to be submitted to I Dig Trees. Once delivered the whips are to be planted at the allotments to allow them to grow before planting elsewhere in the village.

d. To consider supporting allotment orchard installation.

The Clerk reported that together with Mrs Thorne they were proposing the creation of an allotment orchard in an area of the allotments not used for cultivation that would be tended to by plot holders. Sufficient interest and support had already been provided by current plot holders to the idea. Councillors agreed to support the idea with the Clerk and Mrs Thorne asked to prepare costings and investigate possible grant funding for the project.

Elsewhere the Clerk was disappointed to report that the Community Orchard in Old Road Meadow had been stripped of all plums even before they were ripe by residents. In addition trees had been damaged to pick fruit. Councillors asked the Clerk to arrange for signage and a note in the Messenger that asks residents to respect the trees and that the fruit is for all to enjoy and not for a few to take advantage of.

e. Update on all environmental and leisure issues.

- Play Inspections are currently being carried out by the Clerk with Councillors Avrili and Wright having agreed to be trained to do this.
- The Clerk was asked to arrange a village litter pick after the 5th November.
- The re-installation of the benches on Centenary Field has not been successful and therefore an alternative solution using some sort of ground anchors will be required. The Clerk was asked to progress this.
- Councillor Seaman will be leading a group to paint the PC Stores shortly.
- A allotment working party day is to be arranged to carry out tasks in the allotments with the assistance of allotment plot holders e.g.: installation of plot posts, strimming, hedge cutting etc.
- Bollard installation is scheduled for Crackle Hill and Centenary Field. The bollard at Old Road Meadow is still pending purchase.
- The Clerk has discussed with our grass cutters the creating of a wildflower area at the rear of Centenary Field and the trimming of the hedge. A quotation for this is pending.
- The wildflower area at Old Road Meadow can now be cut. Councillor Parsons advised that the cut grass should be left in situ for 10 days prior to raking off.
- Mr Alderman has contacted Davidson Homes to arrange an inspection of the green space and planting.

952. NOMINATION OF MEPPERSHALL VILLAGE HALL TRUSTEE

a. To discuss and consider nomination of Meppershall Village Hall Trustee

The Clerk and Councillor Addy are working together on seeking nominations.

953. PERSONNEL

a. Allotment Co-ordinator update.

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After discussions with Mrs Thorne, who had previously expressed a wish to resign from the Council and her role as Community and Environment Officer, she was offered and accepted the role of Allotment Co-ordinator working 2-3 hours per week covering the allotments and the Community Orchard at Old Road Meadow. Her new role started on 1st September 2023.

Councillors supported the creation of this new role and the opportunity to retain Mrs Thorne as an employee.

b. Community and Environment Officer update.

No applications have been received for this role which has now been modified to take into account the Allotment Co-ordinator role. Councillors asked the Clerk to re-advertise the role and emphasise the flexible working hours that could fit in with school timetables, training provided, pension contribution and paid holidays.

954. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:25pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be the 9th October 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
- PCC = Bedfordshire Police Crime Commissioner
- VAS = Vehicle Activated Sign