

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2025

PRESENT: **Councillors:** Parsons (Chair), Addy, Avrili, Choksi, Merryweather,
Russell and Thompson

The Clerk: A Marabese.

Others: 5 members of the public.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:05pm.

1115. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Ward Councillor Stephenson, and Councillors Wright and Zavacky.

1116. 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 Addy. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours if required. Carried.
- c. Other information
 - The Chairman thanked Mrs Thorne and the CPRE volunteers who had carried out the hedge laying at Old Road Meadow around the orchard.

1117. 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 or dispensations were declared or requested.

1118. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:07pm) 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.

- a. Ward Councillor Stephenson
No report submitted.
- b. No village organisations were at the meeting.
- c. Questions from the public sent to the Clerk.
None
- d. The following questions were raised, or comments made by members of the public.
No questions were raised by members of the public.

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:09pm.

1119. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 13th January 2025.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Russell. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 13th January 2025 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.

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1120. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Co-option

- i. To consider interest in co-option to role of parish councillor.

The Clerk advised that there was currently a vacant councillor seat, and that an expression of interests in co-option form had been received and circulated to Councillors with meeting papers. The individual interested in co-option, Dr Tejal Choksi, was present at the meeting.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to co-opt Dr Tejal Choksi as Councillor to Meppershall Parish Council. Carried.

- ii. New councillor to sign declaration of acceptance of office.

Dr Choksi 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.

b. Policies

- i. To re-approve MPC Document Retention Policy v1.1.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Russell. Resolved to re-approve MPC Document Retention Policy v1.1. Carried.

- ii. To confirm receipt and response to Freedom of Information request 03.02.2025A.

The Clerk advised that the council had received on 3rd February 2025 a freedom of information request concerning the new play equipment installed at Old Road Meadow.

c. Stocken House

- i. Update on identified issues, risks, meeting and actions required regarding land transfer.

The Clerk advised the following:

- CBC have advised that any changes to the play equipment / area must be submitted to CBC for approval via a VOC. Davidsons are aware of this and would like MPC to approve the new design. This will include the following:
 - Racy the roadster springer moved to location agreed with Clerk and accessible springer added.
 - Spinner bowl changed to phact spinner.
 - Child friendly hedging to be added to outer side of fencing. Gaps filled in.
 - No tree to centre of play area.
 - Musical panel moved to centre with bench.
 - Wickstead benches to be installed
 - Swing seats to be changed.
 - Woodend trim trail to be removed

Councillors noted the changed to the design of the play area and the need for CBC to approve the changes via a VOC.

- If CBC approve the new site levels, Davidsons would like to know what the cost of equipment would be that would permit MPC to cut grass without issue. They would be willing to contribute to this new machinery.

Councillors noted that a side arm flail would be required and asked the Clerk to consult with MPC grounds maintenance contractors regarding costs (for 5 years). Feedback to be given to Davidsons.
- Would MPC approve a different landscaping layout with regards to amenity grass and meadow mix? The Clerk explained that Davidsons would like to provide more amenity grass and less meadow mix as per drawings provided to the Clerk (details shared with councillors).

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Councillors agreed that more amenity grass would be beneficial with meadow mix in the more difficult to reach areas.

d. IT and Communications

i. Update from the Clerk.

A report on website usage was circulated to councillors at the beginning of the month. Creation of the Meppershall.org website and amendments to the MPC website are pending as works to add the Neighbourhood Plan surveys to the website have taken priority.

1121. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders.

i. VE Day lamppost signs.

Clerk provided costs for these, and it was agreed that they did not provide value for money. The Clerk was asked to provide options for installation of silent soldiers at the next meeting.

ii. Titan disability seat strap locked boxes.

Hags have confirmed that the titan seats are provided without straps. They will send us one set of straps FOC but suggested we put these into a locked RADAR box near the play equipment. Clerk is liaising with contractors on a solution.

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Clerk progress the installation of titan disability seat straps and locked boxes at both ORM and Centenary Field. Carried.

iii. Reinstallation of Stocken house trim trail in village at cost of £750.

Councillors requested that the Clerk ask Davidsons if they would install this at the school for the village as MPC is unable to spend money on this.

iv. To approve any other purchase order requests.

None

b. Document approval.

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

Proposed Cllr Addy /Seconded Cllr Avrilil. Resolved to approve bank statements and reconciliations current account 200, savings account 63, and MultiPay statement and reconciliation 26/11/24 and 27/01/2025 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 two councillors present at the meeting.

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

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Payment No:	Payee	Purpose	Amount	MultiPay Card
Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc				
DD01-2501	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (13/01/25)		Direct Debit
DD02-2502	Everflow	Allotment Water (08/03/25 to 07/04/25)	£33.07	Direct Debit
DD06-2501	Lloyds Bank	Multipay monthly charge (27/01/25)	£3.00	MultiPay
DD04-2501	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Monthly Mobile Plan (19/01/2025)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD07-2501	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/01/25)	£5.40	MultiPay
DD08-2502	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/02/25)	£4.50	MultiPay
SO01-2502	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (15/02/25)		
FA01-2502	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (10/02/25)		
FA02-2502	NEST	VT EE Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA03-2502	NEST	VT ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA04-2502	Mr R Hirst	Salary (10/02/25)		
FA05-2502	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
BACS976	BigDug	Storage container shelving and workstation	£1,845.54	MultiPay
Payment requests received before agenda published				
BACS974	Scotts Ground Maintenance Limited	CF - Clearance pre-hedge planting	£144.00	
BACS975	Scotts Ground Maintenance Limited	ORM - Clearance for hedge laying	£180.00	
BACS977	JRB Enterprise Limited	Dog Dispenser refills	£69.90	
BACS978	Mrs D Holden	Allotment deposit return	£50.00	
Payment requests received after agenda published				
BACS979	Unity Trust Bank	Monthly bank charge (28/02/25)	£6.00	
BACS980	Anglian Water Business (National)	CF Water supply	£37.12	

1122. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications responded to under delegated powers.

- i. CB/25/00338/OUT - Land at and adj. to Aco Technologies Plc, Hitchin Road, SG17 5TE - Outline Application: Erection of up to 11, 212m² of Use Class E(g)/B2/B8 floorspace with associated access, parking, landscaping, drainage, and ancillary works. All matters reserved except means of access.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 25/00338. Carried.

1123. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group advised that a new village survey has been created and that hard copies will be distributed to residents and visitors to the village starting 1st April 2025. A separate youth survey will also be made available to under 18's who both live and visit the village. Surveys will also be circulated to local businesses, schools, groups etc. Collection boxes for hard copies will be located throughout the village. Both surveys will be available on our website for those who wish to respond online.

In addition to the two surveys the group will also be requesting a housing needs survey and design codes.

1124. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. Update on all highway's issues including Shefford Road repairs / resurfacing and pedestrian footway on Fildyke Road.

- i. Clerk to chase update from CBC again on footway on Fildyke Road and from Poppy Gardens to Crackle Hill.

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- ii. Clerk emailed CBC explaining problem with Hoo Road signage and requesting help. They have advised that the right-hand sign will be added to the list for repair/replacement once CBC Building Control have sufficient budget. The left-hand sign has been sent to a highways improvement scheme officer to investigate replacement.

1125. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Update on allotments.

- i. The Clerk has chased payment of remaining allotment rent due.
- ii. An inspection is planned for the end of March 2025.
- iii. The Clerk will start looking at options for track access security fencing and replacement gate. It was suggested that this includes locks and Armco fencing to protect the main fencing opposite car parking spaces.

b. Update on new play equipment installations.

Works have progressed on Centenary Field, but the weather is delaying works. The Clerk is in constant contact with the supplier and installers. The Clerk is requesting that CBC consider an interim payment from s106 to the supplier.

c. Update on all other environment and leisure issues.

- i. The Council will be organising a Village Litter pick on Saturday 22nd March from 10am to 1pm.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the clerk arrange for the purchase of gloves, bags and hoops required for the litter picking. Carried.
- ii. The Clerk was asked to repeat the dog fouling and barking marketing campaign from Spring.
- iii. The Clerk was asked to issue an update to residents on the installation of the play equipment explaining that due to inclement weather the installation has been delayed but when ground conditions permit the installation will be completed.

1126. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8:30pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be 10th March 2025, 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