

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



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

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

The Clerk: A Marabese.

Others: 11 members of the public.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:02pm.

1127. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

1128. 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 Thompson. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours if required. Carried.
- c. Other information
 - None.

1129. 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.

1130. 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 – Report read by the Clerk
 - Central Bedfordshire Budget: This was debated by Full Council on 27th February, and both the revenue and capital budgets were passed. The following [relevant] items were secured by opposition amendments: 1) Tidy Tip opening times will NOT be restricted; 2) Funding APPROVED to pay for a Full annual clean of gullies rather than the bi-annual proposal; 3) decision to charge for replacement black bins due to loss or damage was REVERSED; 3) 30k found for community outreach on flooding, which may support the new CERTS group established in Shillington; 4) ward councillor grants SAVED for a further year. In addition, CBC element of council tax will increase by 4.99%.
 - Ward Councillor Grant Scheme: I am pleased to report that a campaign by opposition councillors was successful and that the ward councillor grant scheme will continue to be available to apply for during the 2025/26 financial year. Also see the section on the budget, below. With a few applications received since your last meeting I expect the budget to be used this year.
 - Attendance at Parish Council meetings: I am conscious that I have not been present at meetings for several months now. This is because The Parish Council meetings occur on a Monday evening, which is typically a sitting day in Westminster, and it can be

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difficult to leave depending on the whipping arrangements. However, your next meeting (14th April) falls in Easter recess, and I expect to be in attendance. As you know, I am also happy to schedule informal meetings with Parish Councillors (on Fridays or Saturdays, and some Thursdays) should you wish to do that from time-to-time. No village organisations were at the meeting.

The Chairman asked the Clerk to arrange meetings with Ward Councillor Stephenson for regular updates.

b. Village Organisations

- Meppershall FC is being brought back, and we would like to use the pitch on Centenary Field on Sunday mornings. *Council agreed that if two thirds of the members of Meppershall FC are from Meppershall then the pitch will be provided FOC.*

c. Questions from the public sent to the Clerk.

- The Clerk has received a complaint regarding Meppershall Pre-School. *Council advised that the Clerk should respond suggesting the complainant follow the pre-school complaints procedure, write to the Trustees (if part of a MAT) and ultimately write to Ofsted if not happy.*

d. The following questions were raised, or comments made by members of the public.

- I believe that a village map should be commissioned showing the very extensive network of footpaths, permissive paths and bridleways around the Parish. I would suggest it could be sited at the junction of Walnut Tree Way and the High Street. We have a wonderful resource in the countryside around us, and yet many, if not most people, don't know where these footpaths are. *Clerk to investigate cost of a map showing footpaths and greenspaces in and near to the village.*

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:25pm.

1131. MINUTES

- ### **a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 10th February 2025.**

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 10th February 2025 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.

1132. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Policies

- #### **i. To approve MPC Schedule of Delegation v2.0**

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to re-approve MPC Schedule of Delegation v2.0. Carried.

- #### **ii. To approve Cost Sharing Agreement with Gravenhurst Parish Council**

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to re-approve Cost Sharing Agreement with Gravenhurst Parish Council. Carried.

b. Annual Parish Meeting

- #### **i. To agree arrangements for Annual Parish Meeting on 28th April, 7pm.**

The Clerk was asked to invite all local organisations and businesses and advertise the meeting in the Messenger and online.

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c. Consultations

- i. To consider any actions required for the CBC conducted Community Governance Review that will start on 30th June 2025.

Council had reviewed the information passed to them by the Clerk and were asked to inform the Clerk of any input they wish to share with Council. Council agreed that they have right number of Councillors and there were no issues with parish boundaries.

d. Stocken House

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

The Clerk advised the following:

- An alternative design of the play equipment / area has been submitted to CBC for approval via a VOC.
- Trim trail is wooden and not steel as agreed - Wooden trail to be removed and reinstalled at school. Requested Davidsons cover cost of this. Response pending.
- Knee rail fence - Some installation does not make sense. Clerk to revisit site and send details to Davidsons.
- Site levels - Land height raised above 1meter permitted - CBC considering VOC.
- Standpipe - Underground water standpipe to be provided.
- Trees - Mr Alderman to visit.
- Bins - AM to provide details of additional bin locations.
- Paul Waterfield to come back to MPC regarding contribution to new mower and planting of 2 Oak trees (Cambridge trees). Clerk to discuss when meeting them.
- Landscaping plan – Davidsons report CBC have approved.

e. 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.

1133. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders.

- i. Land drainage on Centenary Field near play area at cost of £1720+VAT.
Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Clerk progress the installation of land drainage on Centenary Field near the new play area (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10). Carried.
- ii. Silent soldiers to celebrate VE Day.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr parsons. Resolved that the Clerk purchase silent soldiers to celebrate VE Day (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10). Carried.
- iii. BATPC New Councillor Induction Training - 23rd April at cost of £35.
Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Clerk arrange new councillor induction training for Cllr Choksi (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.
- iv. BATPC responding to planning applications training for Clerk, JT and Mr Pain at cost of £120.

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Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved that the Clerk arrange planning training for three members of MPC (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

- v. NALC Planning for the Future: Navigating the new planning framework – 29th October 2025 12pm – 1.15pm at cost of £35+VAT.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved that the Clerk arrange Planning for the Future: Navigating the new planning framework training for the Clerk and Cllr Thompson on 29th October (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

- vi. Allotment track security fencing at cost of circa £6.5k.

The Clerk advised that a quote for £6,284.54 had been received for the supply and installation of 27mtrs of 2mtr high v mesh fencing, 18m of armco, 1 pedestrian gate and 1 vehicle gate, both gates with Locinox Vinci digig locks, current gate and chain link fence to be kept and all other materials removed from site. 2 more suppliers yet to quote. Cost to be requested from s106 funds.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the together with Mrs Thorne and Councillor Thompson select a supplier for new fencing up to a cost of £8k funded with s106 monies (Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s.26). Carried.

It was noted that the Clerk would need to write to allotment plot holders affected by the new fencing installation.

- vii. NP survey printing.
- viii. NP surveys adding to website.
- ix. NP survey post boxes and accessories.
- x. NP banners.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the Clerk arrange for Neighbourhood Plan survey printing, website costs, post boxes and accessories and banners up to a cost of £1,000 (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

- xi. Other purchases

2 x tonne bags of Type 1 MOT for use on the allotment track.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to purchase 2 x tonne bags of type 1 MOT for use on allotment track (Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s.26). Carried.

b. Internal Auditor appointment

- i. To approve Auditing Solutions as MPC Internal Auditor.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to appoint Auditing Solutions as MPC Internal Auditor (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

c. Document approval.

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

Proposed Cllr Addy /Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to approve bank statements and reconciliations current account 201, savings account 64, and MultiPay statement and reconciliation 26/02/25. Carried.

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 two councillors present at the meeting.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Zavacky. 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				
DD01-2502	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (17/02/25)		Direct Debit
DD01-2503A	Standard Life	Clerk ER Add. Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
DD02-2503	Everflow	Allotment Water (08/04/25 to 07/05/25)	£33.50	Direct Debit
DD04-2502	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Monthly Mobile Plan (19/02/2025)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD06-2502	Lloyds Bank	Multipay monthly charge (26/02/25)	£3.00	MultiPay
DD07-2502	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/02/25)	£5.40	MultiPay
DD08-2503	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/03/25)	£4.50	MultiPay
SO01-2503	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (14/03/25)		
FA01-2503	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (10/03/25)		
FA02-2503	NEST	VT EE Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA03-2503	NEST	VT ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA04-2503	Mr R Hirst	Salary (10/03/25)		
FA05-2503	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
BACS981	Microsoft Limited	MS365 Business Standard annual fee	£138.24	MultiPay
BACS987B	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges for February 2025	£6.00	Direct Debit
Payment requests received before agenda published				
BACS982	BATPC	AP - Response to planning apps training	£40.00	
BACS983	BATPC	AM & JT - Response to planning apps training	£80.00	
BACS984	Scotts Ground Maintenance	Bin Clearance	£96.00	
BACS985	Scotts Ground Maintenance	Stump grinding at allotments	£384.00	
BACS986	Scotts Ground Maintenance	Brush clearance at ORM	£1,440.00	
Payment requests received after agenda published				
BACS987	HMRC	Qtr 4 PAYE & ER NI	£711.19	
BACS988	Mr P Lenk	Allotment rent paid twice	£14.85	

- ii. To approve payments to be made prior to 31st March 2025 (financial year end).
Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Clerk arrange for payments required by financial year end (31st March 2025) to be approved and authorised by Councillor Thompson or Parsons and present the schedule of these payments at the next meeting. Carried.

1134. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications responded to under delegated powers.

- i. CB/25/00510/FULL - Hoo Farm, Chapel Road, SG17 5NQ - Closing up of two existing accesses and the creation of a new singular access with new parking area.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 25/00510 but request the inclusion of a planning condition that " planting of suitable species of equivalent scale and character and thus providing equivalent canopy and cover and habitat connectivity. Carried.
- ii. CB/25/00613/FULL - 86 Shefford Road, SG17 5LL - Front porch extension, single storey rear extension, external alterations.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 25/00613. Carried.

1135. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group advised that the Village Questionnaire has been finalised with only QR codes to be added. There is also a Youth Questionnaire that is currently being finalised. The Village Questionnaire will be delivered to all homes in Meppershall by the Messenger delivery team. Businesses will be contacted separately by phone and email prior to delivery of questionnaires. The

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Youth Questionnaire will be provided to local schools, clubs and organisations for distribution to young people. We have also created a business card that has a QR code on the back to hand out to young people encouraging them to complete the questionnaire. Both Questionnaires will be available to respond to on the Parish Council website. Collection boxes for hard copies will be located throughout the village. We would encourage all residents and visitors to the village to respond to the questionnaires and there will be both posters, articles in the Messenger and social media posts promoting this. We have not yet decided on how to deal with data entry.

1136. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

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

Council noted that some potholes on Shefford Road have been marked up in yellow.

1137. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. To consider request from village resident to supervise their child doing 1 hour's litter picking in the village per week as part of the Duke of Edinburgh awards.

Whilst Council was supportive of young residents undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh award, they raised concerns regarding public liability insurance and supervision. The Clerk was asked to check with the Council's insurers regarding and issues and request indemnity from the child's parents together with risk assessments etc.

b. Update on allotments.

The Clerk and Mrs Thorne will be carrying out an interim inspection at the end of March.

c. Update on new play equipment installations.

Works have stalled due to the weather and pooling water at the end of Centenary Field that requires land drainage. Once the land drainage has been installed and the temperature rises the wetpour surfacing can be laid and the rest of the play equipment installed.

d. To approve FOC hire to MAPTA of Centenary Field on 6th April for Easter Community Event.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council approve an FOC hire of Centenary Field to MAPTA for their proposed Easter Community Event. Carried.

e. To consider request to install noticeboard at entrance to Walnut Tree Way.

Council agreed to review the location of noticeboards and maps etc.

f. Update on all other environment and leisure issues.

The Clerk was asked to progress the planting of Commemorative trees.

1138. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:10pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be 14th April 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.

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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