

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2025

**PRESENT:**      **Councillors:** Parsons (Chair), Avrili, Choksi, Litchfield, Merryweather, Thompson and Zavacky  
                  **The Clerk:** A Marabese.  
                  **Others:** Ward Councillor Blake Stephenson  
   2 members of the public and PCC John Tizard.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:07pm.

## 1139. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Councillors Russell and Wright.

## 1140. 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
- The Chairman thanked the Clerk for her attendance at the meeting in the current circumstances and hoped that those present would understand the reasons for a lack of documents issued prior to the meeting.
  - The Chairman welcomed both Ward Councillor Blake Stephenson and PCC John Tizard to the meeting.

## 1141. 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.

## 1142. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:12pm) 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. Beds Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) John Tizard
- It is great to be here in Meppershall, as I am trying to visit as many parish councils as possible. I would like to provide you with a few words about the role of the PCC. The role came into existence in 2011 with the first PCC for Beds Police taking up their role in 2012. I am the 4<sup>th</sup> PCC for Bedfordshire Police. The PCC is the voice of the public and has no operational responsibility. The PCC sets the strategic direction of Beds Police via a Police and Crime Panel. He then holds the Chief Constable to account for delivering the strategy. The PCC sets the budget for the Police and has a role beyond policing and chairs the local Police and Crime Commissioners Board.
  - The PCC has 6 current key missions:
    - Prevention – Invest in prevention and work with local organisations.
    - Local Policing – Reinvigorate local policing to make officers more visible and accessible.



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- Tackle Serious Crime – Bedfordshire has more gun crime than other counties in the East of England and we have active county lines and issues with gun crime. Therefor ewe need to reduce serious and organised crime as well as youth violence.
- Reduce violence and protect all women and children.
- Excellence – Deliver an outstanding police service.
- Victims – Put victims at the heart of the justice system.
- Obviously as PCC I do not know what is going on in every village in Bedfordshire but I do work with many other people and organisations including Blake Stephenson in his role as both Ward Councillor and Member of Parliament.
- A main issue for the PCC to tackle is the significant crime in and around the urban area of Luton as we are funded as a rural area and not an urban police force.
- Questions from the public to the PCC
  - 30% of our Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire respondents so far have said that they want more visible policing to deal with antisocial behaviour. Can you address this? *All areas of the county wasn't more local neighbourhood policing that is visible. Hope that over time we will see more visible policing including Pc's PCSO's and Special PCs. We currently have 109 community police officers in Beds Police out of 1500 officers.*
  - We need to get local focus back and fused with specialist activities. *By the end of this year, we will have 20 additional police officers, 8 PCSO's and 10 students. If the Government continues to increase funding for officers, we could have more. We are currently developing a local policing strategy where there is more localised policing.*
  - Our PCSO was last in the village on a Friday afternoon when most people are at work. How can we meet with them when at work? *Will mention this to the Chief Inspector.*
  - What is the vision on 'prevention of crime'? *Prevention takes many forms, and we need to educate the public to do simple things like locking vehicles to reduce car theft. We need to do more to give young people alternatives to ASB and crime and discourage them from carrying knives. We need more early intervention and work with schools. 50% of crime has a 'fire' element to it therefore there are things that the Government and MPs to lobby for e.g.: cybercrime. Whilst looking at the export an import of drugs in and out of the county we also need to tackle the demand for drugs. 10% of people in Bedfordshire take illegal drugs. Most retail crime is people stealing to fuels drugs habit. Behind this lies the horror of drugs and county lines. We cannot tackle county lines without the Nation Crime Agency working on national supply.*
  - Your predecessors have been successful in increasing the Beds Police budget. What are you proposing to do to help Beds Police increase their income? *The Beds Police budget has fallen by £50million in real terms over the last 10 years. There are various pots of money coming in and I will continue to lobby for additional funding. Beds Police is leading the way in the use of AI in improving productivity and we need to look at other ways of using our funding more efficiently.*
- b. Ward Councillor Stephenson
  - Apologies for absences. These Monday evening meetings fall on a day when I need to be in Parliament therefore, I can only really attend meetings when Parliament is in



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recess. Obviously, I am here as a Ward Councillor and not an MP, as the MP for Meppershall is Alastair Strathern.

- Important to note that all MP's covering the Bedfordshire areas are committed to working with the PCC on the Police funding formula.
  - Not getting a lot of case work from Meppershall residents. There is possibly confusion regarding my role. *Cllr Parsons suggested an article in the Messenger.*
  - CBC Budget – There is some good news on the final approved budget:
    - Tidy Tips will remain open 7 days a week, but a booking system will be in place.
    - Ward Councillor grants have been saved and will advise the Clerk when the application process is re-opened.
    - £170k has been allocated to allow for annual gully cleaning.
    - The decision to charge for bins has been revoked.
    - There is a huge demand on the budget for SEND and adult social care.
  - Universal Studios – CBC is setting up a sustainable committee and working group that will focus on the planning application that will go to the Government. Any feedback from MPC and residents can be forwarded to Ward Councillor Stephenson.
- c. Village Organisations
- None present.
- d. Questions from the public sent to the Clerk.
- None.
- e. The following questions were raised, or comments made by members of the public.
- None

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:52pm.

### 1143. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025.  
*Item deferred to next meeting.*

### 1144. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

#### a. Policies

- i. To receive MPC Risk Review Assessment report for 2024-2025 (actions to March 2026).  
*Item deferred to next meeting.*

#### b. Stocken House

- i. Update on identified issues, risks, meeting and actions required regarding land transfer.  
The Clerk advised there has been little communication from Davidsons and that she would check on the status of the recently submitted planning application variation of conditions.

#### c. 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. *The Clerk was asked to provide an update on the meppershall.org website.*



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### 1145. FINANCE

#### a. Purchase Orders.

##### i. Other purchases

##### 1. Hose trucks for use with watering on Centenary Field.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to purchase hose trucks for use with hose pipes and watering on Centenary Field (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10). Carried.*

#### b. Document approval.

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

*Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to approve bank statements and reconciliations current account 202, savings account 65, and MultiPay statement and reconciliation 26/03/25. Carried.*

#### c. Orders for the payment of money.

##### i. Two schedules of payments were 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 Zavacky. Resolved that the schedules of payments up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 as presented be approved and authorised for payment by Councillor Thompson or Parsons. Carried.*

Payment No:	Payee	Purpose	Amount	MultiPay Card
<b>Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc</b>				
DD01-2503B	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (17/03/25)		Direct Debit
DD04-2503	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Monthly Mobile Plan (19/03/2025)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD06-2503	Lloyds Bank	Multipay monthly charge (26/03/25)	£3.00	MultiPay
DD07-2503	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/03/25)	£5.40	MultiPay
BACS989	Gilmex International Ltd	A4 laminating piouches	£14.88	Multipay
BACS990	Amazon Business EU SARL	5 x Box Files	£17.72	MultiPay
BACS991	Amazon Business EU SARL	Litter pick gloves	£73.90	MultiPay
BACS992	Amazon Business EU SARL	12 x Litter pickers	£27.90	MultiPay
BACS993	Amazon Business EU SARL	200x Large black bin bags	£19.94	MultiPay
BACS994	Amazon Business EU SARL	2 x Post boxes	£59.98	MultiPay
BACS995	Amazon Business EU SARL	2 x Post boxes and refuse sacks	£66.97	MultiPay
BACS996	EETOOLS LTD	Wide hose clamps	£15.50	MultiPay
BACS997	Robert Dyas	Bin Bag Hoops x 11	£50.49	MultiPay
BACS998	Robert Dyas	Bin Bag Hoops x 1 Refund	-£4.59	MultiPay
BACS999	Meppershall Social Club	Refreshments for litter pickers 22/03/2025	£23.20	MultiPay

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Litchfield. Resolved that the schedules of payments post 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 as presented be approved and authorised for payment by Councillor Thompson or Parsons. Carried.*

Payment No:	Payee	Purpose	Amount	MultiPay Card
<b>Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc</b>				
DD01-2504	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (14/04/25)	£386.74	Direct Debit
DD02-2504	Everflow	Allotment Water (08/05/25 to 07/06/25)	£34.61	Direct Debit
DD08-2504	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/04/25)	£4.50	MultiPay
SO01-2504	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (24/04/25)		
FA01-2504	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (24/04/25)		
FA02-2504	NEST	VT EE Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA03-2504	NEST	VT ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA04-2504	Mr R Hirst	Salary (24/04/25)		
FA05-2504	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
BACS1000	Amazon Business EU SARL	Large hose trolley	£122.94	MultiPay
BACS1001	Unity Trust Bank	Charges March 2025	£6.00	Direct Debit



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### Payment requests received before agenda published

BACS1002	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	Alpha software support and maintenance lic	£243.60
BACS1003	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	Allotment software support and maintenance lic	£243.60
BACS1004	Scotts Ground Maintenance	Pitch deep surface aeration	£576.00
BACS1005	Scotts Ground Maintenance	Grass cutting & bin emptying	£960.00
BACS1006	HAGS SMP Ltd	Play equipment installation	£48,031.69
BACS1007	Scotts Ground Maintenance	Pitch overseeding	£556.20
BACS1008	Scotts Ground Maintenance	CF Play area drainage install	£2,064.00
BACS1009	Meppershall Messenger	NP Printing	£689.00
BACS1010	Perfect coatings	Play spinner repainting	£360.00
BACS1011	MVI Corporate Merchandise Ltd	2 x NP Banners	£96.00
BACS1012	Scotts Ground Maintenance	CF Wildflower meadow creation	£2,280.00

## 1146. PLANNING AND HOUSING

### a. Applications responded to under delegated powers.

- i. CB/TCA/25/00157 - The Hollies, 2 Shillington Road, SG17 5ND - Works to trees within a Conservation Area: Up to a 1m prune to 5 Apple Trees and 1 Pear Tree as part of Maintenance to Promote Good Health.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 25/00157. Carried.*

- ii. CB/25/00573/ADV - Roundabout at the Junction of Ivel Road Shefford Road and Shefford Bypass, Ivel Road, Shefford - Advertisement: 4 non-illuminated signs on each junction of the roundabout.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Litchfield. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 25/00573. Carried.*

- iii. CB/25/01134/VOC - Sandy View, SG17 5LL - Variation of Condition 13 of planning permission CB/24/03119/VOC (Variation of condition numbers 2, 3, and 13 of planning permission CB/24/00929/FULL (Erection of one four bed dwelling and detached garage): Amendment sought to relocate dwelling 1m closer to eastern boundary and alterations to the design and siting of the garage.). Variation sought to approved drawings for minor design changes.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 25/01134. Carried.*

- iv. CB/25/01102/FULL - 5 Church Road, SG17 5NA - Two storey part single, rear and side extension, internal alterations and creation of Juliet balcony to front elevation.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council has comments for planning application 25/01102 regarding the adequacy of parking. Carried.*

### b. To consider response and actions regarding communication from land promoters regarding land at Chapel Road, Meppershall - Call for Sites submission.

Council agreed that the Clerk and Councillor Thompson could meet with land promoters if required regarding land at Chapel Road as per their current Engagement with Developers policy.

## 1147. 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 'live' for 2 weeks and so far, we have had 45 online submissions



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and 62 paper submissions with multiple respondents per questionnaire (138 in total). Comments are interesting with many respondents valuing the countryside and rural community. Most respondents also don't know where the John Bunyan or Jubilee walking trails are located. Data analysis of the questionnaires will be forthcoming, and we still need a plan of how to deal with this. There have been articles in the Messenger and on social media together with posters and banners promoting the questionnaire/

### **1148. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT**

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

Council notes that repairs to Shefford Road from the A507 roundabout up to the village entrance are planned (and welcomed).

### **1149. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE**

#### **a. To consider supporting No Mow May initiatives.**

Council agreed they would not support No Mow May initiatives this year.

#### **b. To consider request to permit a family dog show on Centenary Field.**

Council agreed that more details would be required of the event together with evidence of public liability, stewards, risk assessments and liaison with the Village Hall. *Clerk to progress.*

#### **c. To consider location of silent soldiers.**

The Clerk advised that MPC would not be able to locate silent soldiers permanently on Walnut Tree Way. Councillors agreed that the best alternative location would be either side of the Festival of Britain sign at the end of Crackle Hill Road.

#### **d. To consider submission of pre-planning application advice for replacement fencing at allotments.**

Councillors agreed that as the replacement fencing would be entirely on MPC allotment land and would not exceed 2mts in height that not planning permission would be required.

#### **e. Update on allotments.**

The Clerk needs to issue some new contracts, and the interim inspection is pending.

#### **f. Update on new play equipment installations.**

The Clerk advised that the new play areas have been completed, and a post installation inspection provided. The only issues to resolve are replacement of the play panels to the personalised ones ordered by MPC and clarification on the play train issues highlighted in the inspection.

#### **g. Update on litter pick held on 22nd March.**

The Clerk reported that as usual the litter pick was well attended, and participants cleared a lot of litter and tipped waste. The Police have been advised of some issues

#### **h. Update on all other environment and leisure issues.**

Many individuals attending the litter pick expressed an interest in the Adopt a Street initiative. *The Clerk was asked to progress this.*



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## 1150. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:09pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025, starting at 7pm in the Village Hall and that the Annual Parish Meeting will be on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025 again 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