

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025

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

**The Clerk:**        A Marabese.

**Others:**                3 members of the public.

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

## 1151. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

### a. Election of the Chairman for the year 2025-2026

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to elect Councillor Parsons as Chairman for the year 2025-2026. Carried.*

### b. Receipt of Chairman Declaration of Acceptance of Office

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

## 1152. ELECTION OF VICE - CHAIRMAN

### a. Election of the Vice - Chairman for the year 2025-2026

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to elect Councillor Avrili as Vice - Chairman for the year 2025-2026. Carried.*

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

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

The Chairman thanked Councillor Wright for his support in the role of Vice-Chairman last year.

## 1153. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

### a. None.

## 1154. 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 Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours if required. Carried.*

### c. Other information

- The Chairman reported on a successful Annual Parish meeting noting it would have been nice to have more residents present, but that attendance by organisations was very good. CPRE Bedfordshire gave an excellent presentation. Village organisations making presentations included MAPTA, Munchkins, Wanderbus, Meppershall Messenger, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the Village Hall. Minutes of the meeting in draft are available on the Parish Council website.
- The Clerk will be meeting with UKPN regarding works they wish to complete in Old Road Meadow to reduce the height of trees and hedges under power lines.
- Meppershall has been shortlisted in this year's CPRE Bedfordshire Living Countryside Awards! CPRE will be in contact soon to arrange a visit with 2 or 3 judges from CPRE Bedfordshire. The winners will be announced at the beginning of July. All shortlisted projects are eligible for the Bedfordshire Choice Award - this is where the public is

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asked to for their favourite entry. A summary of our project entry information will soon be posted on social media, Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/cprebeds>, and on the CPRE website [www.cprebeds.org.uk](http://www.cprebeds.org.uk)

We will be sent information about the voting process, so that we can encourage our supporters to get involved, in due course.

### 1155. 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.

### 1156. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:17pm) 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.
- b. Village Organisations
  - None present.
- c. Questions from the public sent to the Clerk.
  - None.
- d. The following questions were raised, or comments made by members of the public.
  - Are UKPN allowed to cut trees and hedges in the nesting season? It's not illegal to cut trees during nesting season, but it is illegal to intentionally damage or destroy an active nest. Therefore, UKPN will need to follow best practices when doing any work.

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:19pm.

### 1157. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meetings of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 10th March 2025 and 14th April 2025.  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meetings of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March and Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.*

### 1158. DELEGATION ARRANGEMENTS

7:50pm

- a. To appoint Personnel Committee members.
- b. To appoint Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group members.
- c. 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.

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viii. Defibrillator Inspector(s).

Delegation Arrangements 2025-2026		
Organisation, Committee or Working Group	Councillor Delegation / Membership	Non-Council Delegation / Membership
Meppershall Village Hall Committee Representative and Trustee	n/a	Clerk or any Councillor available
Personnel Committee*	Cllr Parsons - Spokesman	Clerk
	Cllr Addy	
	Cllr Merryweather	
Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group*	Cllr Parsons	Clerk
	Cll Choksi	Mr Andrew Pain - Chairman
		Miss Jane Hubbard - CBC
		Mrs Chapman - Chapman Planning
Environment & Leisure working group	Cllr Litchfield - Spokesman	Clerk
	Cllr Merryweather	Allotment Co-ordinator
	Cllr Zavacky	Environment Officer
	Cllr Addy	
Planning & Housing working group	Cllr Thompson - Spokesman	Clerk
	Cllr Russell	Mr Peter Crossley
Highways & Transport working group	Cllr Avrili - Spokesman	Clerk
	Cllr Wright	
Finance working group	Cllr Wright - Spokesman	Clerk
	Cllr Parsons	
	Cllr Avrili	
Community Safety & Risk Management working group (includes Neighbourhood Watch and Policing)	Cllr Wright - Risk Spokesman	Clerk
	Cllr Choksi	
Procedures & Legal working group	Cllr Thompson - Spokesman	Clerk - Spokesman
	Cllr Avrili	
	Cllr Parsons	
IT working group	Cllr Addy - Spokesman	Clerk
		Miss Lucy Standbridge
Defibrillator Inspector	Cllr Parsons	
	Cllr Addy	
* Terms of reference govern these committees		

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to appoint councillors, and members to committees and working groups as listed above. Carried.*

ix. To consider any other groups required.

Councillors agreed that the current committees and working groups met the needs of the Council.

### 1159. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

#### a. Procedures - Review and adoption of:

8:00pm

i. Code of Conduct v3.0 (no changes)

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to re-approve MPC Code of Conduct v3.0. Carried.*

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- ii. Dispensation Guidance and Form v2.0 (no changes)  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to re-approve MPC Dispensation Guidance and Form v2.0. Carried.*
- iii. Engagement with Developers v1.1 (no changes)  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to re-approve MPC Engagement with Developers v1.1. Carried.*
- iv. Financial Regulations v4.0 (changes made)  
Councillors noted that MPC Financial Regulations differed from the model produced by NALC however they reflected the processes and procedures that MPC had in place and were considered robust.  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to approve MPC Financial Regulations v4.0. Carried.*
- v. Standing Orders v7.0 (changes made)  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to approve MPC Standing Orders v7.0. Carried.*
- vi. Personnel Committee Terms of Reference v1.1 (no changes)  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to re-approve MPC Personnel Committee Terms of Reference v1.1. Carried.*
- vii. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee Terms of Reference v2.1 (no changes)  
*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to re-approve MPC Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee Terms of Reference v2.1. Carried.*
- b. Health & Safety and Risk Management**
  - i. To receive MPC Risk Review Assessment report for 2024-2025 (actions to March 2026).  
*Deferred to next meeting.*
- c. Stocken House**
  - i. Update on identified issues, risks, meeting and actions required regarding land transfer.  
The Clerk advised that discharge of conditions applications regarding site levels and play equipment installation are currently pending a decision with CBC. It is evident from reports submitted by officers on the planning portal that there are objections to the amendments requested by Davidsons as part of the request to discharge planning conditions. The Clerk will monitor this and seek to provide accurate information to residents.
- 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. *The Clerk was asked to provide an update on the meppershall.org website and chase Miss Standbridge on the progress.*

## 1160. FINANCE

### a. Purchase Orders / Contracts

- i. To consider purchase of additional bin for Centenary Field (top end near play equipment).

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Both Mr Hirst and Mrs Thorne confirmed that the top end of Centenary Field near the newly installed play equipment have always been areas where litter accumulates due to the wind pushing it into the hedging etc. Councillors agreed that an additional bin in this location would not resolve this problem and noted that there were already 5 bins on Centenary Field.

- ii. To consider purchase and installation of additional benches at Old Road Meadow (play area for parents).

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to purchase additional benches for Old Road Meadow (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10). Carried.*

- iii. To consider purchase and gifting of 2 x picnic benches to MAPTA

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to purchase and gift 2 x picnic benches to MAPTA (Local Government Act 1972 s.137). Carried.*

- iv. To approve any other purchase order requests.

1. Dog poop bags (as per budget) for both dispenser and fencing.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to purchase dog poop bags as per budget. (Litter Act 1983). Carried.*

### b. Budget v Actual

8:30pm

- i. To receive 2024-2025 budget v actual reports and consider any amendments required to 2025-2026 budget.

The Clerk provided Council with a budget v actual report for 2024-2025 and advised that the internal audit will be conducted on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2025. Councillors raised no questions.

### c. Banking Mandate

8:33pm

- 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 amend the banking mandate to include Councillors Avrili, Wright and Zavacky. Carried.*

### d. Document approval

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

*Deferred to June meeting.*

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

- i. To approve direct debit, standing order and other regular monthly payments.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved that the Council approve the direct debit, standing order and other regular monthly payments as presented. Carried.*

Payment No:	Payee	Purpose	Amount
FA01	V Thorne (9th month)	Monthly Salary	Variable *2
FA02	NEST	Allotment Co-Ord EE Pension	
FA03	NEST	Allotment Co-Ord ER Pension	Variable *2
FA04	R Hirst (9th Month)	Monthly Salary	Variable *2
FA05	NEST	Environment Officer ER Pension	Variable *2
FA06	Alessandra Marabese (15th month)	Monthly Salary	Variable *1
DD01	Standard Life (mid month)	Clerk Pension	
DD02	ICO	Annual Data Protection Fee	£47.00
DD03	Everflow	Monthly Water Charges	Variable
DD04	Smarty Mobile	Mobile Contract Clerk	£7.20
DD05	Amazon	Amazon Web Storage	Variable
DD06	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay Card Balance Clearance (includes £3 monthly fee)	Variable
DD07	Smarty Mobile	Mobile Contract - Allotment Co-ord	£5.40

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DD08	Smarty Mobile	Mobile Contract - Environment Officer	£5.00
DD09	Unity Trust	Monthly Bank charges	Variable

- ii. 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 Wright. Resolved that the schedules of payments 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>				
DD06-2504	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay monthly fee (28/04/25)	£3.00	MultiPay
DD07-2504	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/04/25)	£5.40	
DD08-2505	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/05/25)	£4.50	MultiPay
DD09-2505	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges 01/04/25-30/04/25	£6.00	Direct Debit
FA01-2505	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (09/05/25)		
FA02-2505	NEST	VT EE Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA03-2505	NEST	VT ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA04-2505	Mr R Hirst	Salary (09/05/25)		
FA05-2505	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA056-2505	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (15/05/25)		
<b>Payment requests received before agenda published</b>				
BACS1013	Meppershall Village Hall	Room Hire 28/04/25	£40.00	
BACS1014	R Hirst Expenses / Shefford Building Supplies	Hosepipe fittings	£37.96	
BACS1015	Scotts Ground Maintenance	Grass Cutting etc	£2,371.92	
BACS1016	CPRE	Annual Membership	£60.00	
BACS1017	Royal British Legion industries	Tommy Figure	£350.00	MultiPay
BACS1018	Amazon Business EU SARL UK	Hose Trolley	-£122.94	Multipay
<b>Payment requests received after agenda published</b>				
BACS1019	NALC	Clerk training - Planning for the Future	£42.00	
BACS1020	MJ Ryall Building Supplies Ltd	2 x 1 tonne bags of type 1 MOT	£129.48	
BACS1021	CPRE Bedfordshire	Grant (approved Jan 2025 for 25/26 fin yr)	£600.00	

## 1161. PLANNING AND HOUSING

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

- i. CB/25/01405/FULL - Land North of Fildyke Road, Meppershall - Erection of four dwellings (Use Class C3) including two bungalows with associated private drive and landscaping.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 25/01405 due to but not limited to; outside settlement envelope, change to visual appearance and character of village. Carried.*

- ii. 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 Avrili. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 25/01102. Carried.*

## 1162. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group advised that there has been a good response so far to the Village Questionnaire which is due to close on 18<sup>th</sup> May. Another 52 paper questionnaires have been collected with more due for collection in the coming week. All councillors were asked to promote completion of the survey.



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### 1163. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

- a. To consider how to address issue of some wheelchair users using the road instead of the footpaths on Shefford Road due to the poor state of the footpaths.**

The Chairman advised that this issue was raised at the Annual Parish meeting, and it has since been confirmed that some residents have resorted to purchasing off road wheelchairs due to the state of the footpaths. Those in the poorest state are those at the junction of Shefford Road and Hoo Road, on Shefford Road in front of the old Foresters cottages, near the Care Home opposite 80 Shefford Road and between Emery Croft and Orchard Close. Councillors agreed that it cannot be acceptable that people must push wheelchairs in the road due to the poor state of footpaths as this creates a health and safety issue. *The Clerk was asked to contact Ward Councillor Stephenson to request help in raising the issue with CBC Highways.*

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

The Clerk will be requesting an update on footpaths on Fildyke Road.

Cllr Parsons asked the Clerk to report to CBC the damaged Marywells street sign.

### 1164. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

- a. Update on allotments.**

The Clerk needs to issue some new contracts. Mrs Thorne advised that two notices to quit need to be issued also. It was also noted that the allotment gate has been left open on several occasions. The Clerk is progressing with a new fence installation.

- b. To consider request from Shefford Children's Centre to hold a free play in the park session in May Half term (Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May – morning) on Centenary Field.**

*Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved that the Council approve request from Shefford Children's Centre to hold a free play in the park session on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May (am) free of charge. Carried.*

- c. To consider request from Meppershall FC to use football pitch on Centenary Field on Sunday mornings next season.**

The Clerk advised that Meppershall FC have confirmed that more than two thirds of their membership are Meppershall residents. The Clerk prepared and circulated an agreement for pitch hire for approval by the Council with meeting papers.

*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council approve the pitch hire agreement with Meppershall FC. Carried.*

- d. Update on all other environment and leisure issues.**

The Clerk advised that HAGs would be onsite on 15<sup>th</sup> May to replace the non-personalised play panels in the Centenary Field Toddler area. The post installation inspection issue raised with the play train on Centenary Field has been resolved (the clamp on the ring has been pushed round so that there is no longer a gap).

### 1165. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:10pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025, starting at 7pm in the Village Hall.

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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

Approved 9th June 2025