

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 21ST JULY 2025

PRESENT: **Councillors:** Parsons (Chair), Avrili, Russell and Thompson
 The Clerk: A Marabese.
 Others: 6 members of the public.

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

1178. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

1179. 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 thanks Mrs Thorne for her great service to the village and council over these many years. He noted that her work in and for the village is, and has been, much appreciated and valued, even if sometimes unsung. The Council is very sorry to see that she is leaving.

1180. MEMBERS INTERESTS

- a. To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda and requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests.
Councillor Thompson declared an interest in agenda item 1184.b.i.
No dispensations requested or granted.

1181. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:08pm) 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 however the Clerk advised that she had met with Councillor Stephenson and raised issues concerning the footpaths awaiting construction in Fildyke Road (at Chapel Road end) and Shefford Road (from Poppy Gardens to Cracklehill), street signage and the installation of vehicle activated signs. Councillor Stephenson is chasing for updates on all these issues with CBC officers.
- 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.
 - Would MPC review the request to add / extend the current conservation area in Meppershall to include current hayfields adjacent to Station Road and behind the old rectory. This area contains listed buildings, has protected views, is used for agriculture

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 21ST JULY 2025

and contains a multitude of biodiversity and wildlife. *Council advised that this issue was an agenda item for this meeting – see 1185.c.*

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:15pm.

1182. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Statutory Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 9th June 2025.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved that the minutes of the Statutory Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 9th June 2025 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.

1183. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Procedures - Review and adoption of:

- i. To consider implications of changes to the Practitioners Guide 2025 and actions to be taken.

The Clerk advised that changes to the Practitioners Guide 2025 included a new assertion from councils on digital and data compliance. In summary councils were now expected to have an IT policy, appoint a Data Protection Officer and conduct data audits, training etc. *The Clerk together with councillors Avrili and Thompson were asked to investigate the implications of these changes and present solutions at the next meeting.*

b. Parish Council Strategy

- i. To consider brainstorming session to formulate parish council future focus and strategy.

The Clerk and councillors discussed the benefit of organising a brainstorming session to formulate the parish councils future focus and strategy. An adjoining local council has recently undertaken this task with great success. Councillors agreed that it would be a worthwhile activity after the summer holidays. *The Clerk was asked to organise the session with a facilitator.*

c. Health & Safety and Risk Management

- i. To receive MPC Risk Review Assessment report for 2024-2025 (actions to March 2026).

Deferred to next meeting.

d. Village Hall 7:37pm

- i. Update from working party on meeting with members of MVH.

The Clerk reported that the working group met with some MVH trustees on 14th July. MVH would like to investigate the possibility of transferring the carpark and most green spaces around the village hall to MPC (this will include the patio area to the rear of the social club). They will discuss this with committee members at their next meeting. Note the Clerk has requested a quotation for grounds maintenance from Scott's GM and MVH have advised that the car park lights are not operational due to electric not being earthed. Meeting details were noted by councillors, and it was agreed that the working group, dependent upon an update from MVH, would need to present a proposal with cost, risk and responsibility implications to council.

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 21ST JULY 2025

e. Stocken House

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

The Clerk advised she had received emails from Davidsons regarding the standpipe requirements at The Glebe. The Clerk has concerns about the connection that Davidsons want to provide (no standpipe – just a stop valve in a lockable chamber) and the flowrate / pressure of the supply. *The Clerk was asked to investigate options and confirm flowrate etc.*

f. 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 gov.uk website is in progress with Iris Web Media. The Clerk also advised of a request to provide email addresses to members of the Meppershall Golf Society that have been actioned. It was also requested that we provide email addresses for Wanderbus.

1184. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders / Contracts

- i. To approve any purchase order requests.

- 1. Salt bin for MVH / MPC carpark.

Agreed 285ltr bin to be purchased.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to purchase salt bin (Highway Act 1980 s185). Carried.

- 2. Parking post for Centenary Field.

Parking post on path from car park to MVH Stores has been damaged and is not repairable. Clerk to purchase a sturdier post.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to purchase parking post for Centenary Field (Open Spaces Act 1906 s10). Carried.

- 3. Replacement fence section for Centenary Field pitch.

Mr Hirst to provide the Clerk with dimensions required.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to purchase replacement fence section for Centenary Field (Open Spaces Act 1906 s10). Carried.

- 4. Variety of tools and equipment required for environmental village maintenance.

Mr Hirst has provided a list of tool and equipment required for village maintenance e.g.: ladder, pressure washer etc. These are items that he is currently using of his own, but MPC should provide and PAT test.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to purchase tools and equipment required for environmental village maintenance (Open Spaces Act 1906 s10). Carried.

- 5. To approve NP Green Infrastructure Plan refresh costs.

The Clerk advised that a quotation was pending from BRCC but there is no funding available to cover the cost. MPC has £1210 in NP reserves (£1825-£615 data input) but will need to use general reserves to fund this.

GIP refresh to include:

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 21ST JULY 2025

- Update existing Aspirations Map. This will involve MPC/NPG identifying those aspirations which a) have been undertaken, and b) are now not possible to deliver; and then BRMC updating using an updated OS base map.
- Undertake community engagement asking for ideas for new aspirations and identifying most important sites, for LGS consideration. It is suggested that this is achieved by x2 Drop-in sessions; a mid-week evening and a weekend slot; if possible, piggybacking on an existing community event.
- Update map based on above engagement outputs.
- Undertake an online prioritisation survey – Survey questions to be designed by Beds RCC but hosted on MPC/NPG website.
- Undertake assessment of any newly proposed potential LGS's.
- Produce final updated GI Map and Table of Aspirations; LGW assessment report; and Statement of Community Engagement.

The Clerk was asked to arrange for the GIP refresh as the NP could not be competed without it. Costs to be taken from earmarked and general reserves.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to approve cost for NP GIP refresh (Localism Act 2011). Carried.

6. To approve use of grounds maintenance contractor to assist with clearance of overgrown allotment plots.

Mrs Thorne advised that this was not required.

7. To approve addition to grounds maintenance contractor contract to include cutting of Community Orchard and allotments.

Until a replacement for Mrs Thorne is found the Clerk suggested that these tasks be undertaken by Scotts GM our grounds maintenance contractor.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to purchase chain and lock for Centenary Field (Small Holdings and Allotment Act 1908 s26). Carried.

8. To approve purchase order requests.

The Clerk reported that the village Festival of Britain Sign has been snapped. Mr Hirst has removed it for now. The Clerk has requested quotations for repair from two signage companies.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to repair / purchase new Festival of Britain signage. (Local Government Act 1972 s144). Carried.

b. Grants

- i. **To consider grant request from Wanderbus for £1000.**

Clerk advised that this grant is included in the budget.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to award grant of £1000 to Wanderbus and that payment be added to the meetings payment schedule. Carried.

- ii. **To consider grant request from Meppershall FC for £500.**

Clerk advised that this grant is not included in the budget.

Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Russell. Resolved to award grant of £500 to Meppershall FC and that payment be added to the meetings payment schedule. Funding for the grant to come from general reserves. Carried.

c. Document approval

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

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 21ST JULY 2025

Proposed Cllr Russell/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to approve bank reconciliations and statements Current a/c 203, 204 and 205, Savings a/c 66, 67 and 68, and MultiPay 280425, 270525 and 260625. Carried.

Councillors also noted that funds held at Unity Trust would receive a better interest rate within a Public Sector Deposit Fund with the CCLA (The interest rate is 4.2% whilst our current deposit account is only bringing in 2.25%). The Clerk was asked to open this account with CCLA and move money as required. Signatories on account to be Clerk and Councillors Parsons, Avrili and Wright.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Russell. Resolved to open Public Sector Deposit Fund with CCLA. Carried.

d. Orders for the payment of money.

- 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 Avrili. 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	Notes
Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc					
DD01-2506	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (16/06/25)		Direct Debit	
DD01-2507	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (14/07/25)		Direct Debit	
DD03-2507	Everflow	Water (08/08/25 to 07/09/25)	£1,188.58	Direct Debit	
DD04-2504	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/04/25)	£7.20	MultiPay	
DD04-2506	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/06/25)	£7.20	MultiPay	
DD04-2507	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/07/25)	£7.20	MultiPay	
DD06-2506	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay monthly fee (26/06/25)	£3.00	MultiPay	
DD07-2506	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/06/25)	£5.40	MultiPay	
DD08-2507	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/07/25)	£4.50	MultiPay	
DD09-2507	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges 01/06/25-30/06/25	£6.00	Direct Debit	
FA01-2507	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (10/07/25)			
FA02-2507	NEST	VT EE Pension Contribution		Direct Debit	
FA03-2507	NEST	VT ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit	
FA04-2507	Mr R Hirst	Salary (10/07/25)			
FA05-2507	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit	
FA06-2507	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (15/07/25)			
BACS1031	Olypa.com LLP	Tractor Farm Jack	£64.98	MultiPay	
BACS1032	Amazon Business EU SARL, UK	Lock and Chain for CF	£12.62	MultiPay	
BACS1033	Net World Sports	Football net accessories	£38.41	MultiPay	
BACS1034	Henlow Building Supplies	Topsoil - CF	£200.00	MultiPay	
BACS1035	YPO Supplies Limited	2 x picnic benches for MAPTA	£1,090.78	MultiPay	
BACS1039	Net World Sports	Goal net twine	£14.59	MultiPay	
BACS1044	Net World Sports	Goal post paint	£59.77	MultiPay	
BACS1045	HAGS SMP	CF Play equipment	£53,968.30	Paid on 19/05/25 but not on pay list	
Payment requests received before agenda published					
BACS1036	BATPC	Annual affiliation fees	£583.00		
BACS1037	BATPC	TC - New Councillor Training	£35.00		
BACS1038	V Thorne	Expenses - Petrol	£7.36		
BACS1040	Meppershall Village Hall	Room Hire for meetings	£240.00		
BACS1041	Clear insurance Management Ltd	Additional cost for new play equipment	£77.01		
BACS1042	Scotts Grounds Maintenance	June grass cutting	£2,403.13		
BACS1043	Auditing Solutions Ltd	Interanl Audit Fee	£516.00		
BACS1046	Miss L Scozzari	NP Questionnaire data input	£615.00		
Payment requests received after agenda published					
BACS1047	Whitbread Wanderbus Limited	Grant	£1,000.00		
BACS1048	Meppershall FC	Grant	£500.00		

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 21ST JULY 2025

1185. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications responded to under delegated powers.

- i. CB/25/01849/VOC - Sandy View, SG17 5LL - Variation of condition number 13 of planning permission CB/25/01134/VOC (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.
No comment submitted.
- ii. CB/25/01102/FULL - 5 Church Road, SG17 5NA - Part two storey part single storey rear extension, internal alterations, fenestration changes and creation of Juliet balcony to front elevation
- iii. No comment submitted

b. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration.

- i. CB/25/02062/FULL - 38 Fildyke Road, SG17 5LT - Single storey rear/side extension.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 25/02062. Carried.

c. To consider request for extension / addition to conservation area.

The Clerk advised that MPC has received a request from residents to extend / add to the Meppershall conservation area. The area would include current hayfields adjacent to Station Road and behind the old rectory at Monks Pool. This area contains listed buildings, ponds (thought to be old fish pools linked to a monastic site), meadows (the traditional name was Coneygate – a monastic site for rabbit warrens), has protected views (from the top of the site you can see Lister Hospital in Stevenage), is used for agriculture and contains a multitude of biodiversity and wildlife.

CBC have advised that there are two ways we could do this.

- We could look at the extension as a designation of Greenspace in our Neighbourhood Plan.
- Alternatively, there are some very specific rules for designating an area as a conservation area. The Council would have to demonstrate that the area has a definite architectural quality or historic interest to merit designation - more details can be found in the NPFF.

Councillors agreed that this proposed extension / addition to the conservation area has merit and should be progressed via both routes suggested by CBC. The Clerk was asked to initiate discussions with CBC on designating the area as a conservation area.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council action an addition / extension of the Meppershall Conservation Area to include the current hayfields adjacent to Station Road and behind Monks Pool. Carried.

1186. 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 data has been input into our website, data extracted and is currently being 'cleaned' and structured by the group. Template design guides have been provided to the group and a decision has been made to create the design guide for Meppershall by

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 21ST JULY 2025

the group. The housing needs survey is not required as we are not looking to designate site allocations. Council have already agreed to progress a review of the Green Infrastructure Plan, and this will take place in early September with BRCC facilitating the session. CBC have confirmed that the referendum is not chargeable.

1187. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

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

The Clerk advised that:

- Shefford Road has been re-surfaced from the village boundary at the pedestrian crossing to the Woodlands Rest entrance.
- The Clerk wrote to CBC's S278 Agreement Team for an update on the progress of the construction of a footpath on Shefford Road / High Street (from Poppy Gardens to Crackle Hill Road) that was part of conditions of planning approval given for CB/21/00053/FULL - 1 Shefford Road, Meppershall, Shefford, SG17 5LJ. No update received from them, so Ward Councillor Stephenson has requested an update. CBC Highways Officer is awaiting further feedback from the Highways Agreements Team before responding.
- The Clerk has wrote to CBC's S278 Agreement Team for an update on the progress of the construction of a footpath on Fildyke Road that was part of conditions of planning approval given for the following sites: CB/17/02409/FULL- New Close Nurseries, Fildyke Road, Meppershall – see also CB/19/02994/VOC and CB/18/04569/FULL - Tower View Nurseries, 81 Fildyke Road, Meppershall, Shefford, SG17 5LU – see also CB/19/02679/VOC. Update pending. No update received from them, so Ward Councillor Stephenson has requested an update. CBC Highways Officer is awaiting further feedback from the Highways Agreements Team before responding.
- The Clerk has requested information from Ward Councillor Stephenson on the new Road Safety Policy to be reviewed by CBC in August that allows parish councils to contribute to the purchase and installation of vehicle activated signs in their villages.
- The Clerk has requested input into Ward Councillor discussions with Highways officers regarding highway improvements for 2026-2027.

1188. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Update on allotments.

Mrs Thorne advised that all is as up to date as possible at the allotments prior to her leaving her role this week. She also advised concerns from some residents and plot holders about drone activity coming from and over the allotment site. Council confirmed that this was not permitted. *The Clerk was asked to amend the allotment rules and regulations concerning this.*

b. Storage container painting.

The Clerk is awaiting a list of materials and steps required to paint the PC storage container from Councillor Litchfield. The same materials can be used for painting the allotment container. *Mr Hirst was asked to add the allotment container welding repairs to those required on the PC storage container.*

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 21ST JULY 2025

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Clerk arrange purchase of all materials required to repaint the PC storage container and the allotment container. Carried.

c. Update on all other environment and leisure issues.

Mrs Thorne advised that the community orchard paths in ORM have been reinstated. The Clerk suggested that Council organise a litter pick for the autumn. It was agreed to hold this on 1st November.

1189. STAFF MATTERS

a. To consider appointment of Allotment Co-ordinator and interim arrangements.

Mrs Thorne leaves us on 22nd July. Mr Hirst has agreed to cover the role until a replacement is found. Council requested that maintenance of the community orchard is removed from the Allotment Co-ordinator job description and that this is given to the Environment and Leisure Officer. Adverts will go out later this week.

b. Request from Stondon Parish Council for assistance with play area inspections.

Stondon Parish Council has requested assistance with play area inspections as they have no-one trained to do this at the moment. Mr Hirst has agreed to do the inspections but will do so as an MPC employee. MPC will then invoice Stondon Parish Council for his time and additional costs.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Clerk arrange with Stondon Parish Council 'hire' of Mr Hirst for play area inspections. Carried.

c. Sexual harassment training.

The Clerk advised that the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 came into effect on 26 October 2024. The law mandates that employers take proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. This includes providing relevant and substantial sexual harassment prevention training to all employees and managers (councillors too). See: <https://www.acas.org.uk/sexual-harassment/steps-for-employers-to-prevent-sexual-harassment>

Mr Hirst has also requested training for employees on conflict management / step away training.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Clerk select appropriate sexual harassment and conflict management training for staff. Carried.

1190. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:05pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be 8th September 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