

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

**PRESENT:**      **Councillors:** Parsons (Chair), Addy, Avrili, Merryweather and Wright  
                  **The Clerk:**      A Marabese.  
                  **Others:**        3 members of the public.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7:12pm.

## 1191. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

## 1192. 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 said that he was sad to hear of Derek Litchfield's resignation from the role of councillor and wished him well for the future. This means that the Council will be seeking another individual to take on the role.
  - The Chairman also noted a letter of thanks has been received from Wanderbus after receipt of grant funding.
  - And finally, it is great to hear that Meppershall Parish Council has been recognised with a Commended award in the CPRE Keep it Wild category of the Living Countryside Awards. This is a great achievement for the Council but in particular for all those involved in doing the work.

## 1193. MEMBERS INTERESTS

- a. To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda and requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests.  
No interests declared.  
No dispensations requested or granted.

## 1194. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:18pm) 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

The Chairman advised that Ward Councillor Stephenson was due to attend the meeting however he has been called into parliament for a vote this evening and the notes below have been provided via email for the meeting.

- Apologies for absence - I had planned to join you this evening. I am on Jury Service and free during the evenings. I did however take a call from the Whips this morning and I am required to be in Parliament to vote this evening. I have been staying up to date with the Parish Clerk, and we had a meeting including the Chair this weekend, which was very productive.

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

- It has been reasonably quiet over the summer months. The next Full Council will meet on Thursday 25 September.
- Planning Matters - Five Year Land Supply - Several appeals have determined that CBC has now fallen below the five-year land supply, which is causing concern about the prospect of more speculative development now being approved.
- Planning Matters - Universal Studios - This is not in our ward, but the project is of regional interest. The consultation has closed, and the decision now rests with the Department for Communities, Housing and Local Government. A copy of CBC's submission to the planning consultation can be found here:  
<https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/universal>
- Planning Matters – Footpaths - CBC has so far failed to enforce upon developers the conditions to build footpaths along Fildyke Road and between Poppy Gardens and Crackle Hill. I am seeking a view from Officers as to why developers are being allowed to drag their heels on both.
- CBC Finances - Finances at the Council are dire. The council debt has surged 25.5% in 2024/25 rising from £605.3m to £759.5m (an increase of £500 per resident). This is the result of inflation and borrowing costs and is slowing down projects and asset disposals to protect finances. The Council is at risk of issuing a s114 notice (bankruptcy) with reserves projected to fall even further, to just £33m by April 2026. Decisions by the Government have put councils throughout the country under incredible strain. Please bare this financial position in mind when expressing a desire that Central Bedfordshire prioritise money on local projects.
- CBC Full Council meeting 17th July - There were several relevant motions put forward which garnered support from councillors, including:
  - the expectation that CBC argue for investment in healthcare as a priority and to negotiate with the Government for community health hubs to serve our communities.
  - an expression of collective concern about CBC's lack of strategic and operational leadership in education (there are calls for an advisory working group including local schools).
  - that full linear/gully drainage cleaning should commence annually, as had been budgeted for and promised.

A further motion was also submitted to support my Private Members Bill on the consideration of flooding in the planning process, but it will now be considered at the September meeting.

The annual report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) Chairs noted the following:

- During 2024/25, the number of scrutiny-related meetings increased to 38, with continued use of sub-committees and task forces to support in-depth work. Over 25 all-Member briefings were held to support understanding of key issues. The report highlights a growing emphasis on performance monitoring and a rise in the number of recommendations made by OSCs, with 94% of recommendations implemented within 12 months.
- Each OSC has contributed to shaping policy and holding decision-makers to account. Key areas of focus included school performance and safeguarding (Children's Services OSC), financial resilience and organisational change (Corporate

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

Resources OSC), access to primary care and housing safety (Social Care, Health and Housing OSC), and infrastructure, highways, and environmental issues (Sustainable Communities OSC).

- And that looking ahead, the report identifies a need to reset and strengthen the scrutiny process, with a review of the function planned for 2025/26. Priorities include earlier engagement in policy development, improved tracking of recommendations, and greater participation from non-Executive Members and residents.
- Highways: Fly-tipping, surface dressing, fix my street - Entirely anecdotally, I have noticed an increase in fly-tipping in our area during the summer. I am in touch with Highways for a run-down of numbers. Over the summer has CBC focussed its efforts on eleven priority roads throughout the county. Concerns have re-surfaced about the speedy closures of fix my street reports without proper investigation. I am following this up with CBC Officers.
- Ward Councillor Grant Scheme & other community grant funding - No further ward council grant applications have been received. I can't imagine this can possibly survive the next budget round so if any groups need any support please get in touch.
- Casework of note - There are concerns about school transport arrangements ahead of the new term, which I am currently investigating with CBC.
- Apologies for absence - I had planned to join you this evening. I am on Jury Service and free during the evenings. I did however take a call from the Whips this morning and I am required to be in Parliament to vote this evening. I have been staying up to date with the Parish Clerk, and we had a meeting including the Chair this weekend, which was very productive.
- 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.
  - None

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:20pm.

### 1195. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Statutory Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025.  
*Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved that the minutes of the Statutory Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chairman. Carried.*

### 1196. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

#### a. Invitations

- i. Attendance at celebrations of the restoration of the tower and major works to St. Mary the Virgin Church on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October.  
It was agreed that Cllr Parsons would attend events on both days with Cllr Wright and the Clerk also attending on 11<sup>th</sup> October.

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

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

- i. Digital and data compliance actions update to include IT Policy, appointment of Data Protection Officer, data audits and training.

The Clerk and Cllr Avrili have been speaking to industry experts regarding digital and data compliance requirements for parish councils. The Clerk has already attended Part 1 – GDPR Foundations and Theory training with two additional training sessions booked.

- ii. Digital safety  
*Deferred to next meeting.*

- iii. Lone Working  
*Deferred to next meeting.*

### **c. Health & Safety and Risk Management**

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

*Deferred to November meeting.*

### **d. Stocken House**

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

The Clerk advised:

- She has responded to the underground hose tap proposal by Davidsons with details of water regulation requirements and details of an alternative above ground standpipe that meets regulation. Response pending.
- CBC have not accepted the alternative play area design proposed by Davidsons. The Clerk and CBC's Play Officer met online with Miracle (Davidsons contractor) to discuss the proposal and changes to it. Miracle to discuss with Davidsons. Pending update.
- CBC have not yet made a decision on the application by Davidsons for a planning application variation of condition to alter the height and design of the green open space areas intended for adoption by MPC.

### **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 gov.uk website area still in progress with Iris Web Media. Mr Hirst will look at the MPC computer to see what is making it work slowly.

## **1197. FINANCE**

### **a. Purchase Orders / Contracts**

- i. Base covers for outdoor gym x 4 = £134.56+VAT

*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase replacement base covers for outdoor gym (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19). Carried.*

- ii. Pitch line marking machine

*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase pitch line marking machine and accessories (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19). Carried.*

- iii. Wreath for Remembrance Day = £50.

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase Remembrance Day wreath (Local Government Act 1972 s137). Carried.*

iv. RPII Routine Renewal training

The Clerk is currently looking into organising training for this.

v. Christmas Tree and installation

Cllr Merryweather to accompany the Clerk when selecting a tree (higher than last year if possible).

*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase Christmas Tree and organise installation (Local Government Act 1972 s144). Carried.*

vi. Christmas Tree Light Switch on event – Santa outfit.

The Clerk advised that a Santa outfit is required for the Christmas Tree Lights Switch on Event. Cllr Addy offered to supply both an outfit and ensure that Santa is available for the evening. The Clerk also requested purchase of appropriate banners for the event.

*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase Christmas Tree Lights Switch on banners (Local Government Act 1972 s144). Carried.*

vii. Bulbs and wildflower seeds.

*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase bulbs and wildflower seeds up to the value of £500+VAT (Open Spaces Act 1906 s10). Carried.*

viii. To approve purchase order requests.

1. iPad for Mr Hirst use (as budgeted).

*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase iPad as budgeted (Local Government Act 1972 s111). Carried.*

2. Cleaning and painting of MPC Storage Container.

*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to delegate ordering of cleaning and painting of MPC Storage Container to Clerk. Carried.*

**b. Parish Council Insurance**

i. To confirm renewal of Parish Council insurance with Clear Insurance (3rd year of 3-year LTA).

The Clerk has been chasing for renewal information based on an updated assets register but nothing received to date.

*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to delegate payment of insurance to Clerk. Carried*

**c. Grant Requests**

i. To consider grant request form Meppershall Munchkins for £500.

Councillors asked the Clerk if Munchkins would prefer MPC to purchase items required and donate. Clerk to confirm.

*Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to award grant of £500 to Meppershall Munchkins or purchase items they require and donate. Carried.*

**d. Document approval**

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

*Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to approve bank reconciliations and statements Current a/c 206, Savings a/c 69, and MultiPay 8072025. Carried.*

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

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

- 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 Addy/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>				
DD01-2508	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (11/08/25)		Direct Debit
DD01-2509B	Standard Life	Clerk ER backdated pension contribution		
DD03-2508	Everflow	Water (08/09/25 to 07/10/25)	-£240.57	in credit
DD03-2509	Everflow	Water (08/10/25 to 07/11/25)	£254.04	Direct Debit
DD04-2508	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/08/25)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD06-2507	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay monthly fee (28/07/25)	£3.00	MultiPay
DD06-2508	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay monthly fee (26/08/25)	£3.00	MultiPay
DD07-2507	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/07/25)	£5.40	MultiPay
DD07-2508	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/08/25)	£5.40	MultiPay
DD08-2508	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/08/25)	£4.50	MultiPay
DD08-2509	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/09/25)	£4.50	MultiPay
DD09-2508	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges 01/07/25-30/07/25	£6.00	Direct Debit
FA01-2508	Mrs V Thorne	Salary (08/08/25)		
FA02-2508	NEST	VT EE Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA03-2508	NEST	VT ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA04-2508	Mr R Hirst	Salary (09/09/25)		
FA05-2508	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA04-2509	Mr R Hirst	Salary (08/08/25)		
FA05-2509	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA06-2508	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (15/08/25)		
FA06-2509	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (15/09/25)		
BACS1049	Mrs V Thorne	Expenses	£7.35	
BACS1050	Amazon Business EU sarl UK Branch	Karcher Power Washer	£130.50	MultiPay
BACS1051	Amazon Business EU sarl UK Branch	Combination 3 way step ladder	£85.24	MultiPay
BACS1052	Amazon Business EU sarl UK Branch	4 socket extension lead - 50m	£57.48	MultiPay
BACS1054	SLCC	Clerk CIIQA Qualification Fee	£450.00	
BACS1055	Autopa Ltd	Replacement CE bollard	£102.91	
BACS1056	Amazon Business EU sarl UK Branch	Grass Access manhole Cover (Xmas tree)	£191.04	MultiPay
BACS1058	Turfix	Pitch marking string and pegs	£57.57	MultiPay
BACS1060	Net World Sports	Replacement 12x6 football nets	£51.79	MultiPay
BACS1065	Amazon Web Services	Amazon web storage service charges	£0.06	MultiPay
BACS1066	Hydrosure Global Ltd t/a Water Irrigation	100m hose reel	£103.98	MultiPay
<b>Payment requests received before agenda published</b>				
BACS1053	R Hirst Expenses	Variety of items	£94.43	
BACS1057	Scotts Ground Maintenance Lts	July Grass Cutting	£2,571.96	
BACS1059	Krystal Hosting Ltd	Gov.uk domain renewal - 1 year	£12.00	
BACS1061	BATPC	RH - Training courses	£51.00	
BACS1062	Meppershall Village Hall	Room Hire - 04/09/25	£29.00	
BACS1063	BATPC	AM - Trainign courses	£156.00	
BACS1064	Hugh Harris Ltd t/a Fresh Air Fitness	Outdoor gym replacement base covers	£161.47	
BACS1067	Scotts Ground Maintenance Lts	August Grass Cutting	1852.80	
BACS1068	HMRC	Qtr 2, PAYE & NI	£1,187.01	

## 1198. PLANNING AND HOUSING

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

- i. CB/25/02412/SECM - Land at Banland Nurseries - Modification of Section 106 Agreement attached to planning permission CB/21/02471/FULL. Amendment to



# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

clauses included at paragraph 3 of part 3 of The Schedule to the Section 106 Agreement, to replace the defective wording with the current agreed requirements.  
No comment submitted

**b. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration.**

- i. None

**1199. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

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

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group reported that he and the Clerk are currently working on the Design Guide to accompany the Plan. Survey data is being used to add to the Neighbourhood Plan and the Design Guide. Contact has been made with BRCC for next steps in updating the Green Infrastructure Plan. The Clerk is still trying to resolve how we can include updates to the Conservation Area within the Plan.

**1200. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT**

**a. Update on all Highways issues.**

Councillors noted that Shefford Road has not been resurfaced from the village entrance to the Esso roundabout. *Clerk to investigate why.*

*Councillors also requested that the Clerk liaise with our Ward Councillor regarding resurfacing of Shefford Road from Emery Croft up to the High Street.*

Councillors requested that Mr Hirst, walk Shefford Road and the High Street and report issues on Fix Mr Street.

**1201. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE**

**a. To consider issues with access to allotment via track and residents parking.**

The Clerk reported that a decision has been made on contractor to replace the allotment fencing. To do this there may be times when the track will have to be closed to vehicular traffic. *The Clerk was asked to advise allotment plot holders and erect notices as required.*

The Clerk reported receiving several complaints about High Street vehicles either blocking the Allotment Access Track or parking vehicles that jut out into the track.

Councillors agreed that this is not acceptable and that *the Clerk must write to homeowners reminding them that the Allotment Track is the property of MPC, access for license holders only and they are not to obstruct traffic or the track.*

Councillors agreed that MPC needs to put in place a licence agreement to formalise access to the allotment track for High Street homeowners, some of whom do not realise that they have no legal entitlement to access the rear of their homes via the track. Clerk asked to work with Cllr Thompson and Avrili to regularise the situation with homeowners.

**b. Update on allotments.**

Councillor Wright offered to assist with allotment inspections.

**c. Christmas Tree Light Switch On event.**

The Clerk is working with the Social Club and the Village Hall to organise an afternoon and evening of family events.

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

# MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

The Clerk reported that there is a lot of work to do at Old Road Meadow. Councillors asked that *the Clerk place articles in the Messenger and online to make residents aware of what we are doing and why.*

Mr Hirst has also met with a resident to confirm the location of orchids in Old Road Meadow to ensure preservation where possible.

### 1202. STAFF MATTERS

#### a. Allotment Co-ordinator update

The Clerk was asked to publish the role online.

#### b. To receive update to NJC Pay Scales and agree actions.

The Clerk reported that amendments have been made to staff salaries as per updated NJC pay scales.

### 1203. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8:45pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be 13<sup>th</sup> October 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