

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 24TH NOVEMBER 2025

PRESENT: **Councillors:** R Avrili (Chair), W Addy, T Choksi, J Marsh, P Merryweather,
and L Wright
 The Clerk: A Marabese.
 Others: 7 members of the public.

The Chair declared the meeting open at 7:03pm.

1217. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Councillors Parsons, Russell, and Thompson.

1218. CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. The Chair 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 Addy/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours if required. Carried.
- c. Other information
 - None.

1219. 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.

1220. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:07pm) the Chair 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 submitted.
- b. Village Organisations
 - No reports submitted.
- c. Questions from the public sent to the Clerk.
 - None
- d. Members of the public raised the following questions and comments.
 - Members of the public present at the meeting also attended the Green Infrastructure Plan workshop on Saturday 22nd November. They raised concerns regarding the Gladman proposal to build 150 homes behind Conegate highlighting reasons why the site was not appropriate for development. They also complemented the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee for the 'really good' survey that was circulated earlier in the year and said that they were supportive of any efforts the Parish Council can make to bring back a sense of community spirit in the village.

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:30pm.

1221. MINUTES

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- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Statutory Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 13th October 2025.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 13th October 2025 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chair. Carried.

1222. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Procedures

- i. To approve data audit and next steps as part of digital and data compliance actions. The Clerk and Councillor Thompson had prepared and circulated a data audit for councillor review with meeting papers. In addition, they proposed a list of actions and next steps which includes review and creation of new policies, training, and new documentation.

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to approve MPC Data Audit. Carried.

- ii. To consider signing Councillor Statement of Assurance.

The Clerk advised that the NALC Improvement and Development Board has introduced the Councillor's Statement of Assurance. This initiative strengthens the commitment to creating positive, supportive, and respectful parish and town council environments in addition to the Civility and Respect Pledge which the Council has already signed up to. The Statement of Assurance allows councillors to personally commit to upholding these values in their daily work and interactions.

Councillors present at the meeting agreed to support the NALC initiative and individually signed their own Statement of Assurance.

Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to support signing of NALC Statement of Assurance. Carried.

- iii. To approve Allotment Track License Agreement, accompanying letter and cost to licensees.

The Clerk together with Councillors Avrili and Thompson circulated a draft Allotment Track License Agreement and letter with meeting papers for approval by Council. Councillors discussed at length what to charge residents annually for use of the allotment track.

Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to approve Allotment Track License Agreement and covering letter with minor changes. Annual charge for residents' use of the Allotment Track to be set at £43 per year due by 31st March 2026 for access from 1st April 2026. Carried.

- iv. To agree date for MPC Strategy, follow up.

Councillors agreed on Tuesday 27th January, 7pm. The Clerk was asked to book a meeting room in the Village Hall.

b. Health & Safety and Risk Management

- i. To review Annual Play Inspection reports and agree on actions to be taken.

The Annual Play Inspection report was circulated to councillors with meeting papers. The Clerk and Mr Hirst confirmed that works have been carried out to resolve minor issues raised in the report. The report has identified minor issues on new play equipment that we cannot identify therefore we will seek clarity on this. Mr Hirst will try to address the external wetpour gaps that exist around some play equipment by

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banking up the edges with soil and grass seed. If this solution does not resolve the problem, we may need to consider wetpour repairs. The MUGA surface also needs bitumen repairs that Mr Hirst can carry out.

Councillors received the Annual Play Inspection Report and agreed on the actions undertaken by the Clerk and Mr Hirst.

c. Consultations and meetings

- i. To consider response to CBC Community Governance Review – Stage 2

The Clerk reported that CBC are proposing to reduce the number of Meppershall parish councillors from ten to seven. Councillors agreed that this would have an impact on the workload for councillors in a growing village with more responsibilities and strategy aspirations. Losing three councillors would be detrimental to the work MPC wish to undertake for councillors who are volunteers.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to object to the proposal to reduce the number of parish councillors in Meppershall from ten to seven as part of the CBC Community Governance Review – Stage 2. Carried.

- ii. To confirm attendance at re-scheduled meeting with MP on 5th December.

It was agreed that the Clerk together with Councillors Parsons and Wright would attend the meeting.

- iii. To confirm attendance at Beds Police Priority Setting meetings on 21st January, 1st April, 8th July and 14th October 2026.

It was agreed that attendance would be as follows:

- 21st January = Councillor Addy
- 1st April = Councillor Avrili
- 8th July = Councillor Choksi
- 14th October = Councillor Thompson (if available)

d. Stocken House

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

The Clerk advised:

- No update received from Davidson's or CBC regarding standpipe although both the Clerk and Mr Hirst believe that the standpipe will not have enough pressure to water adequately so an alternative solution should be found. The VOC applications for both the alternative play area design and alteration to the height and design of the green open space areas intended for adoption by MPC have been withdrawn.

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. The Clerk has spoken to Iris Web Media, and they are due to come back to her.

1223. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders / Contracts

- i. Purchase Arnold Baker 14th Edition for £144.

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Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to purchase Arnold Baker 14th Edition for £144 (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

- ii. Sandblasting and re-painting of PC storage container (quote is £2,650 and budget given was £2,000).

The Clerk and Mr Hirst reported back to Council that the quotation to sandblast and re-paint the PC storage container was above the £2000 limit set by Council. The local specialist contractor is quoting £2,650 +VAT to do the work. Alternative contractors are not local, and they are not willing to quote due to the travel distance or have given verbal quotes over £3,000.

Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to contract T Seemarks to conduct sandblasting and repainting of PC Storage container at cost of £2,650+VAT (No alternative competitive quotes submitted as this is a specialist job and no other local contractors. (Local Government Act 1894: Section 8(1)(i)). Carried.

- iii. To consider repair of outdoor gym item at cost of £325 or conduct complete service on all equipment at cost of £917 that includes all parts required.

Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve Maintenance Service Agreement with Fresh Air Fitness for £917.40. Carried.

- iv. To approve all other purchase order requests.

1. BATPC new councillor training for Councillor March at £35.

Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase new councillor training (Local Government Act 1972 s111). Carried.

2. Blue paint for pitch markings £108.78.

Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase pitch marking paint (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19). Carried.

3. Bitumen to repair MUGA surface circa £20.

Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase bitumen repair kit (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19). Carried.

b. Document approval

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

Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to approve bank reconciliations and statements Current a/c 209, and Savings a/c 72. Carried.

c. 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 Marsh/Seconded Cllr Choksi. 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
Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc				
DD01-2510	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (13/10/25)		Direct Debit
DD01-2511	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (17/11/25)		Direct Debit
DD02-2601	ICO	ICO Data protection fee	£47.00	Direct Debit
DD03-2511	Everflow	Water (08/12/25 to 07/01/26)	-£233.14	In credit
DD04-2510	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/10/25)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD04-2511	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/11/25)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD06-2510	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay monthly fee (27/10/25)	£3.00	MultiPay
DD07-2510	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/10/25)	£5.40	MultiPay

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DD08-2511	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/11/25)	£4.50	MultiPay
DD09-2511	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges October 2025	£6.00	Direct Debit
FA04-2511	Mr R Hirst	Salary (19/11/25)		
FA05-2511	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA06-2511	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (19/11/25)		
BACS1084	Festive Lights	Tree lights additions	£51.15	MultiPay Card
BACS1085	Strictly Tables and Chairs Ltd	New tables and Chairs for V Hall	£4,035.36	
BACS1086	Amazon Business EU Sarl UK Branch	Bin Bag Holders	£45.90	MultiPay Card
BACS1087	G'Tecs	Welding repair to PC Storage container	£168.00	
BACS1088	Meppershall Social Club	Grant for Tree Event children gifts	£300.00	
BACS1089	Turfix	100m measuring tape	£53.98	MultiPay Card
BACS1090	Networld Sports	Blue pitch paint	£108.78	MultiPay Card
BACS1091	Amazon Business EU Sarl UK Branch	Dog poo bags	£45.54	MultiPay Card
Payment requests received before agenda published				
BACS1092	Munchkins	Grant	£500.00	
BACS1093	BATPC	Play inspection Training - AM	£280.00	
BACS1094	Meppershall Social Club	Refreshments for Litter Pick 1/11/25	£34.70	
BACS1095	Meppershall Messenger	Road closure notices and NP printing	£168.00	
BACS1096	A Marabese	Costco - bin bags	£25.16	

1224. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications responded to under delegated powers.

- CB/25/03527/FULL - 118A Shefford Road, SG17 5LL - Single storey front and rear extensions.

Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved that the Council has no comment to planning application 25/03527. Carried.

b. Other planning issues

- To consider actions regarding Gladman proposed residential development at Land off Coneygate by Gladman and offer to discuss the proposals in a private meeting. Councillors agreed that the Parish Council follow its Engagement with Developers Policy that covers meeting with developers and their agents.

1225. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group reported that the first BRCC Green Infrastructure Plan workshop was held last Saturday with another planned for Thursday this week. Residents unable to attend the workshops will be able to respond to an online survey via the MPC website. Once the workshops are completed and the online survey closes BRCC will take the results and update the GIP aspirations map and associated documentation. The Clerk and Mr Pain continue to work on the Design Guide, and the Clerk is chasing for an update on the Conservation Area extension work.

1226. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. To consider request to remove light bollards on MPC Crackle Hill roadway and permissive path.

The Clerk has received a request that, as not lit, the bollards on the Crackle Hill roadway and permissive path should be removed as they are no longer connected to electricity supply and a new supply to them is required. MPC have also been asked if we would like to remove the bollards in the MVH carpark for later use. Councillors agreed that the bollards should be left in place until an alternative plan can be put in place.

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1227. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. To confirm response to CBC Leisure Strategy Parish Schedules update.

It was agreed that the Clerk and Cllr Addy would update this on 21st January and then submit to CBC.

b. Update on allotments.

The Clerk will prioritise allotment actions in the month of January.

c. Update on Christmas Tree Light Switch on event.

The Clerk reported that plans for the Christmas Tree Light Switch on event are progressing well. The tree will be delivered and erected tomorrow. Seventeen residents have come forward as marshals for the event. The road closure is all planned, as is the competition, carols and arrival of Santa to switch on the lights.

d. Update on all other environment and leisure issues.

The Clerk reported that works are due to start at Old Road Meadow. Mr Hirst confirmed that twenty-four volunteers turned up for the litter pick. Many people struggled to find litter, but it was a good turnout and event. The Clerk is starting to plan the Summer Village Fayre.

1228. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:05pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be 12th January 2026, 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
- NALC = National Association of Local Councils
- NP = Neighbourhood Plan
- ORM = Old Read Meadow Nature Reserve