

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 12TH JANUARY 2025

- 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.
 - A member of the public said that they looked forward to hearing the Parish Councils' objections to planning application 25/03804 East of Coneygate. However, he noted that the most important thing that residents can do is submit an objection to the application with CBC and sign the petition in circulation. He emphasised that the decision on the planning application is in the hands of CBC and the Planning Inspectorate (if CBC refuse planning permission and the applicant appeals this decision). Procedural issues have been raised with the CBC Planning Officer dealing with the application. Thanks were given to all for helping the voice of the village and villagers to be heard. Issues currently identified with the application concern traffic and roads, rights of way, hilltop aspect of village and erosion of rural edge of the village.
 - A member of the public asked will objections stand if they are based on a template letter. *Yes, each objection letter will be counted as an individual objection however if residents have other points to raise, they should add these to their submissions. When the CBC planning Officer prepares his report on the planning application, he will summarise all the objections raised.*
 - A member of the public wished it to be noted that as a resident of newly built homes in Meppershall he was supportive of new developments but would like to request that the tone of campaigning against this planning application and any others that may come along remains respectful. *The Chair thanked the resident for raising this and wished it noted that the village has gained from recent new developments in the village and the Parish Council will aim to get as much as possible for the village from any future developments. All people once they move to Meppershall are welcomed as villagers irrespective of where they live. The issue here is that it is all about the right homes in the right place.*
 - A member of the public wished it noted that the entrance to the new development is potentially dangerous and will reduce the availability of parking spaces for current residents.
 - A member of the public asked what is the landowners' position on this planning application? *It was noted that the application has been submitted by a land promoter who represents the landowner(s) who have given their support for the application.*
 - A member of the public wished to remind all that objection letters are being collected by a team of residents co-ordinating action against the proposed planning application and that if any resident wants help, then they simply need to ask.

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:30pm.

1233. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Statutory Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday, 24th November 2025.

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Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 24th November 2025 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chair. Carried.

1234. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration.

- i. CB/25/03804/OUT - Land East of Coneygate - Outline Application: Erection of up to 150 dwellings including affordable housing, with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and vehicular access. All matters reserved except for means of access.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 25/03804 and that the Clerk and Councillor Thompson work on the objection letter. Carried.

- ii. Questions raised by residents on application 25/03804:

1. What advice does MPC have on the most prominent issues of this planning application?

The Parish Council has currently identified the following headline issues with this planning application:

- Highways issues, access, and safety,
- Rights of way,
- Slope of site and SUDs,
- Sewage
- Height of site (top of hilltop)
- Erosion of rural edge of the village, and
- Non-conformity to various CBC Local Plan policies.

2. What is the plan of action to coordinate and encourage community responses to the CBC consultation?

The Parish Council together with village organisations and residents have prepared a leaflet for distribution informing recipients of the planning application and highlighting issues with it. The printed leaflet is being distributed to all Meppershall homes by the Messenger team with a sample objection letter. This is a wonderful effort by all concerned. Special post boxes have been erected to collect completed objection letters, and a petition is being organised by a core group of residents behind the Save Coneygate – Fildyke Fields action group.

b. Appeals for consideration including assistance of consultant in creating response.

- i. Appeal 6002693 - CB/25/02814/PIP - Grass Land to the West of Shillington Road, Meppershall - Permission in Principle: Development of up to nine single storey bungalows.

The Clerk reported that a consultant has been contacted with the aim of bolstering the MPC response to the Planning Inspector considering the Applicants planning appeal statement. They have proposed reworking our original objection letter and adding to this. The Clerk believes that the experience of the consultant will aid the MPC submission.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved that the Council appoint Gov Resources Ltd at a cost of £560 to respond to the Planning Inspectorate

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regarding appeal 6002693 - CB/25/02814/PIP - Grass Land to the West of Shillington Road. Carried.

1235. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Procedures

i. Digital and data compliance actions update.

The Clerk and Councillor Thompson advised that the Application for Financial Assistance (agenda item 1234.a.ii.2) has been amended to include changes required for data compliance.

ii. To re-approve:

1. Dignity at Work v1.0 (no changes).
2. Application for Financial Assistance v4.0 (minor changes).
3. Freedom of Information v1.1 (no changes).
4. Dealing with Complaints v1.0 (no changes).
5. Dealing with Habitual and Vexatious Complaints v1.0 (no changes).
6. Equality and Diversity v1.0 (no changes).
7. Sustainability v1.0 (no changes).

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to re-approve all policies under agenda item 1235.a.ii. Carried.

b. 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.

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 gov.uk website are in progress and draft amendments have been sent to the Clerk for review.

1236. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders / Contracts

i. Subscription to Parish Online at cost of £180 per year from March 2026.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to purchase subscription to Parish Online at cost of £180 from March 2026. (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

ii. Meppershall Enclosure Maps 1853.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to purchase Meppershall Enclosures Maps 1853 in first instance from the National Archives and then if required from Bedford Archives. (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

iii. Storage boxes for PC container.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to purchase storage boxes for PC container. (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

iv. Printing of leaflet advising residents of planning application 25/03804.

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Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to print leaflet and associated items advising residents of planning application 25/03804 and how to respond. (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

- v. Installation of bench (table and benches) at ORM £500.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to arrange for installation of table and benches at ORM at a cost of £500. (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10). Carried.

- vi. Installation of new benches at ORM (benches already approved for purchase) £150.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to arrange for installation of new benches at ORM at a cost of £150. (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10). Carried

- vii. Purchase of large mobility kissing gate for ORM entrance £600.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to purchase large mobility kissing gate for installation at ORM at cost of £600. (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10). Carried

- viii. Installation of large mobility gate, additional fencing and moving entry gate at ORM £350.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to arrange for installation of new kissing gate, additional fencing and moving entry gate at ORM. (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10). Carried

- ix. Additional 50mtrs of drainage at ORM £1250.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to arrange for installation of additional drainage at ORM for £1,250. (Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10). Carried

- x. Clerk new computer / laptop.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to purchase new laptop and accessories for Clerk use up to cost of £1,500. (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried

- xi. To approve all other purchase order requests.

None

b. Grants

- i. To consider grant application from Meppershall Messenger for £750.

Councillor Thompson declared an interest in this agenda item.

The Clerk confirmed that this grant was included in the 2025-26 budget.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to approve grant of £750 to Meppershall Messenger. (Local Government Act 1972 s.142 (1)). Carried

c. 2026-2027 Budget

- i. To receive actual and forecast v budget reports for 2025/2026.

The Clerk provided Council with a report on actual plus forecasted spend v budget to the end of the financial year together with a forecast of earmarked and general reserves on 31st March 2026.

- ii. To review and approve 2026-2027 budget.

Deferred to extra-ordinary meeting set for 27th January 2026 at 9pm.

d. 2026-2027 Precept

- i. Review and approve 2026-2027 precept request.

Deferred to extra-ordinary meeting set for 27th January 2026 at 9pm.

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e. Document approval

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

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Marsh. Resolved to approve bank reconciliations and statements Current a/c 210 and 211, Savings a/c 73 and 74, and MultiPay 260925, 271025, 261125 and 291225. Carried.

f. 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 Zavacky/Seconded Cllr Russell. Resolved that the schedules of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment by Councillor Thompson or Parsons. Carried.

Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc				
DD01-2512	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (15/12/25)		Direct Debit
DD03-2512	Everflow	Water (08/01/26 to 07/02/26)	-£533.10	In credit
DD03-2601	Everflow	Water (08/02/26 to 07/03/26)	-£503.14	In credit
DD04-2512	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/12/25)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD06-2511	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay monthly fee (26/11/25)	£3.00	Multipay
DD06-2512	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay monthly fee (29/12/25)	£3.00	Multipay
DD07-2511	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/11/25)	£5.40	MultiPay
DD07-2512	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/12/25)	£5.40	MultiPay
DD08-2512	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/12/25)	£4.50	MultiPay
DD08-2601	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/01/25)	£4.50	MultiPay
DD09-2512	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges November 2025	£6.00	Direct Debit
DD09-2601	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges December 2025	£6.00	Direct Debit
FA04-2512	Mr R Hirst	Salary (11/12/25)	£498.60	
FA04-2601	Mr R Hirst	Salary (09/01/26)	£261.95	
FA05-2512	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA05-2601	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA06-2512	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (15/12/25)		
FA06-2601	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (15/01/26)		
BACS1105	SLCC	Arnold Baker 14th Edition	£149.40	MultiPay
BACS1106	Amazon Business EU Sarl, UK Branch	Paper - 5 x 250 Reams	£27.68	MultiPay
BACS1107	Bestport (Europe) Ltd	Butyl Sealant	£17.50	MultiPay
BACS1108	Amazon Business EU Sarl, UK Branch	Amp Fuses for Tree	£24.69	MultiPay
BACS1112	Amazon Business EU Sarl, UK Branch	Storage Boxes	£153.00	MultiPay
BACS1113	Amazon Business EU Sarl, UK Branch	Clipboards	£33.77	MultiPay
BACS1114	Fiddes t/a Bowcom	Pitch marking paint	£352.63	MultiPay
BACS1115	Fiddes & Sons	Replacement Part for pitch marking	£27.60	MultiPay
BACS1116	Amazon Business EU Sarl, UK Branch	Fence signage	£61.91	MultiPay
BACS1117	Amazon Business EU Sarl, UK Branch	Kids Litter pickers	£44.88	MultiPay
Payment requests received before agenda published				
BACS1097	R Hirst	Expenses - Conduit Breaker	£6.98	
BACS1098	Scotts Ground Maintenance	November grass cutting	£2,532.36	
BACS1099	Scotts Ground Maintenance	Post and Rail Fence ORM	£1,500.00	
BACS1100	HMRC	Qtr 3 PAYE, EE NI & ER NI	£1,210.41	
BACS1101	Forvis Mazars LLP	External Audit	£552.00	
BACS1102	ACM Business Services Ltd	Apr 24 - Mar 26 Telecoms	£360.00	
BACS1103	ACM Business Services Ltd	Apr 23 - Mar 24 Telecoms	£144.00	
BACS1104	Play Inspection Company	Outdoor annual play inspections	£214.45	
BACS1109	BATPC	JM Councillor training	£35.00	
BACS1110	SLCC	Membership fee	£253.00	
BACS1111	NSALG	Annual Membership	£84.00	
BACS1118	Community Heartbeat Trust	Replacement defib pads	£77.94	
Payment requests received after agenda published				
BACS1119	The Meppershall Messenger	Leaflet printing	£341.00	
BACS1120	A Marabese	Workign from Home allowance	£312.00	
BACS1121	Royal British Legion Henlow branch	Remembrance Day Wreath	£50.00	

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1237. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group thanked the Council for their speedy response to requests for assistance with planning application 25/03804 East of Coneygate. The Neighbourhood Plan has not progressed much since December. In progress are the update to the Green Infrastructure Plan, the proposal to extend the conservation area and the Design Guide. Councillors offered to assist in different areas, and the Clerk will send information and tasks as requested.

1238. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. Update on Highways issues.

The Clerk was asked to contact CBC regarding gritting of Chapel Road.

1239. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Update on allotment via track and residents parking agreements and schedule for distribution.

The Clerk together with Councillors Avrili and Thompson have finalised documentation for delivery to residents on 1st February 2026.

b. Update on allotments.

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

c. Village Summer Fayre kick off meeting update and actions for MPC as organiser.

The Clerk reported a kick off meeting for a proposed summer fayre was held last week with the Social Club team in attendance and an abundance of ideas. Unfortunately, the Village Hall has accepted two bookings on the date of the proposed summer fayre that cannot be re-scheduled which is causing concern. Organising of the summer fayre will be a large workload for the Clerk who has little experience and she suggested that Council consider requesting assistance from the new Community Engagement Officer at Stondon Parish Council in organising the event. Councillors agreed that to do the event justice and have the maximum impact it was best to re-launch the village fayre in the summer of 2027 and assist the Social Club in holding a smaller event this year. Councillors also asked the Clerk to include use of Stondon's Community Engagement Officer in the 2026-2027 budget.

d. Update on all other environment and leisure issues.

The Clerk reported that the Christmas Tree Light Switch on Event went extremely well. There was an issue with the lights that Mr Hirst will investigate once the lights are down. A short article on works due to start at Old Road Meadow will be included in the next Messenger.

1240. STAFF MATTERS

a. Allotment Co-ordinator update.

The Clerk will publish the job advert online with a view to appointment for 1st April 2026.

1241. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting at 9:05pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be 9th February 2026, 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.

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