

PRESENT: Councillors: J Parsons (Chair), W Addy, T Choksi, P Merryweather
J Thompson and L Wright

The Clerk: A Marabese.

Others: ~~33~~ Five members of the public.

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

1262. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Councillors Avrili, Marsh, Russell and Ward Councillor Stephenson. Councillor Thompson advised that he would be arriving late.

1263. 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 Parsons/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours if required. Carried.
- c. Other information
 - The Chair reported that he has been selected by BATPC to attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace in May. He is delighted to have received the invitation.

1264. MEMBERS INTERESTS

- a. To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda and requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests.
The Clerk advised that Councillor Thompson has advised of an interest in agenda item 1268.b.i. No other declarations on interests advised.
No dispensations requested or granted.

Cllr Thompson arrived at 7:10pm

1265. PUBLIC SESSION

At this point (7:11pm) 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.
 - A member of the public raised concerns regarding the planning application submitted for 78 High Street (26/00278) where the applicant seeks permission to build 2 large dwellings in the garden. The issues include: new dwellings are too close to existing homes, car barns are near existing dwellings, car parking allocations are not sufficient, design and materials of new dwellings are not in keeping with nearby homes, boundary between 78 High Street and adjacent properties is a 1.2mtr chain link fence

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and there are no details in the planning application of any enhancements to this and the suggestions made by the Planning Officer as part of pre-planning application advice has not been taken into account. *The Chair thanked the member of the public for highlighting these issues that will be considered by the Council when reviewing this planning application as part of agenda item 169.a.i.*

- The Meppershall Gnomes would like to make a grant application for the purchase and gifting of a laptop for use by the organisation. *The Clerk advised that they complete a grant application form and submit this for consideration at the next Parish Council meeting.*

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:18pm.

1266. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Tuesday 9th February 2026.

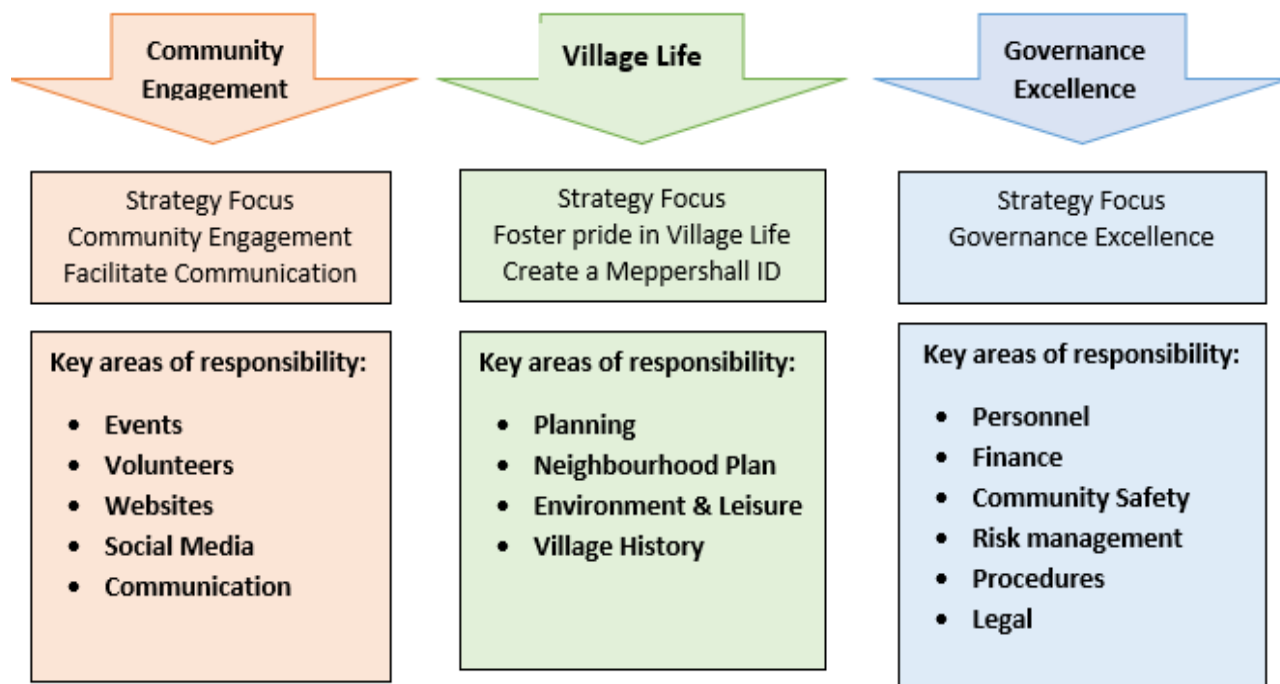
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Tuesday 9th February 2026 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chair. Carried.

1267. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Strategy Focus

- i. Proposal for structure of working groups going forward.

The Clerk proposed the following key areas of responsibility for the working groups agreed at the February meeting.



Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve areas of responsibility for working groups and that Councillors confirm with the Clerk which working groups they wish to be part of. Carried.

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b. Procedures

- i. To approve signing CPRE Commemorative Oak Tree Landowner Agreement.
Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to sign CPRE Commemorative Oak Tree Agreement. Carried.
- ii. To approve data audit and next steps as part of digital and data compliance actions. The Clerk advised that she is moving on with compliance actions and is amending policies and procedures as they come up.
- iii. To re-approve
 1. Document Retention v1.1 (no changes).
 2. Hire of Open Spaces v2.0 (changes made to include Martyn's Law etc.)
 3. Schedule of Delegation v2.0 (no changes).
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to re-approve all policies under agenda item 1267.b.iii. Carried.

c. Health & Safety and Risk Management

7:37pm

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

d. Annual Parish Meeting 7:40pm

7:47pm

- i. To agree arrangements for Annual Parish Meeting on 27th April, 7pm.
The Chair advised that whilst not a Parish Council meeting it would be a good opportunity for all councillors to attend the Annual Parish Meeting.

e. Consultations and meetings

7:50pm

- i. To consider request from Poppy Hill CofE MAT Chair of Trustees to meet with the Parish Council.
Proposed Cllr Addy/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved that the Clerk (if possible), the Chair and other councillors available meet with Trustees of the Poppy Hill CofE MAT. Carried.
- ii. To agree on MPC attendee at Meppershall Messenger AGM on 9th May 10:30am – Village Hall.
It was agreed that the Clerk and the Chair would attend if possible.

f. Stocken House

- i. Update on identified issues, risks, meeting, and actions required regarding land transfer.
The Clerk advised that no update has been received from Davidson's or CBC. The Clerk was asked to send formal chasers to Davidsons and CBC for an update. The Clerk can then provide a community update.

g. 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. The Clerk reported that feedback has been received from The Messenger team but no-one else. Councillors requested the following:
 - Non-static home page (want movement)
 - Would like branding colours created.
 - Would like pictures of the village on a rolling bases on home page.

1268. FINANCE

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a. Purchase Orders / Contracts

- i. Three-day first aid training for Clerk and Cllr Avrili at cost of £275+VAT each.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to arrange for three-day First Aid training for the Clerk and Councillor Avrili. (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.
- ii. Digitised versions of maps at Bedfordshire Archives:
 1. MA86B - 2 hours of working time/ £94.80.
 2. Award MA86 - 2.25 hours of working time/ £106.65.
 3. MAT33/1 - 6 hours of working time/ £284.40.
 4. MAT33/2 - 3 hours of working time/ £142.20.
 5. AT 33 (summary only) - 2.5 hours of working time/ £118.50.*Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to purchase digitised versions of maps at Bedfordshire Archives (Local Government (Records) Act 1962 s.2(1)). Carried.*
- iii. Electrical works to Crackle Hill path and PC container £1,456.72 (inc. VAT).
Mr Hirst advised that the meter is now associated to the Parish Council. Councillors asked that the Clerk ensure that lighting is LED.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to arrange for electrical works to Crackle Hill path and PC container as quoted by Kingham Electrical at cost of £1,456.72. (Local Government (Records) Act 1962 s.2(1)). Carried.
Note: Council did not seek 3 quotations for these works as this supplier has specific expertise and knowledge of the Village Hall and MPC electrical installation.
- iv. To approve all other purchase order requests.
 1. To purchase special edition of porcelain plates of Meppershall locations at cost of £150.00.
Residents have asked the Clerk to purchase for the village 6 x porcelain plates depicting buildings in Meppershall. Each porcelain plate is 21cm in diameter and rimmed with an 18ct gold border. Scenes are of the Church, the School, Crossroads, Methodist Chapel, the Rectory and the Manor House. They are made by Decor Art Creations Ltd who were a British company (dissolved in 2016) known for producing limited-edition porcelain collector plates. There were only 75 of each plate made and this looks like it was 1/75 on the certificate. Seller wants £150 for them. Online research shows that they typically go for £20-£30 each.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to purchase 6 special edition porcelain plates depicting historical images of Meppershall at cost of £150 (Local Government (Records) Act 1962 s.2(1)). Carried.
- v. To approve proposal to issue a 10-year grounds and village maintenance contract effective from April 2027.
The Clerk and Councillor Thompson advised that we need to record in our minutes why we would want to do this (to ensure stability and lower annual costs) and include details in a formal tendering process. Clerk to start work on this early summer.

b. Grants

8:15pm

- i. To approve grant request from Meppershall Messenger for current financial year for £750.
Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved to approve grant to Meppershall Messenger for £750 (Local Government Act 1972 s.142). Carried.

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c. Document approval

- i. To approve journal entries, bank ~~reconciliations~~reconciliations, and bank statements. *Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Choksi*—Resolved to approve bank reconciliations and statements Current a/c 213, Savings a/c 76, and MultiPay 260226—Carried.

d. 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 Thompson/Seconded Cllr Wright—Resolved that the schedules of payments as presented be approved and authorised for payment by Councillor Thompson or Parsons and that any payments required by 31st March 2026 be authorised by the Clerk and 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				
DD01-2602	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (16/02/26)	£399.14	Direct Debit
DD03-2603	Everflow	Water (08/04/26 to 07/05/26) (16/03/2026)	£49.01	
DD04-2602	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/02/26)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD06-2602	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay monthly fee (26/02/26)	£3.00	MultiPay
DD07-2602	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/02/25)	£5.40	MultiPay
DD08-2603	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/03/25)	£4.50	MultiPay
DD09-2603	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges February 2026	£6.00	Direct Debit
FA04-2603	Mr R Hirst	Salary (09/03/26)		
FA05-2603	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA06-2603	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (15/02/26)		
BACS1145	Agrigen Ltd	Fertiliser for ORM Community Orchard	£46.89	MultiPay
BACS1146	Microsoft Limited	MS 365 subscription	£138.24	MultiPay
BACS1147	Dell Corporations Ltd	Computer monitor	£73.34	MultiPay
BACS1148	Dell Corporations Ltd	Computer docking station	£211.63	MultiPay
BACS1149	Dell Corporations Ltd	Dell 16 Plus DB16250 laptop	£1,035.48	MultiPay
BACS1150	Community Heartbeat	Replacement defib pads	£77.94	
BACS1160	Post Office Ltd	2nd Class stamps	£18.60	MultiPay
BACS1161	Bedford Borough Parking	Parking Fee - Beds Archives	£2.30	MultiPay
Payment requests received before agenda published				
BACS1151	NALC	Training - JT Housing Puzzle	£42.00	
BACS1152	NALC	Training - JT Beyond the Precept	£42.00	
BACS1153	NALC	Training - AM Future leaders	£42.00	
BACS1154	Scotts GM	ORM Install kissing gate and move gate	£420.00	
BACS1155	Iris Web Media	Website Form plugin (surveys)	£39.50	
BACS1156	Scotts GM	CF Pitch grass cutting	£127.31	
BACS1157	Geosphere Ltd t/a Parish Online	Annual mapping software subscription	£194.40	
BACS1158	HMRC	Qtr 4 PAYE, ER NI, EE NI	£1,084.36	
BACS1159	Mrs S J Mitchell	Allotment deposit return	£50.00	
Payment requests received after agenda published				
BACS1160	Ms Beth McRobert	Allotment deposit return	£55.00	
BACS1161	TC Seemarks Limited	Repaint PC container	£3,180.00	
BACS1162	Meppershall Messenger	Grant	£750.00	

1269. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration.

- i. CB/26/00278/FULL - 78 High Street, SG17 5LZ - Demolition of existing garage and extensions of the existing bungalow, and erection of two chalet-style dwellings with detached car barns.

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Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 25/00278 due to and not limited to reasons of overdevelopment and sustainability, contrary to MNP Policies, appearance and materials of new dwellings and impact of the proposal on the residential amenities of adjoining occupiers. Carried.

- ii. CB/26/00412/VOC - 23 Hoo Road, SG17 5LP - VOC nos. 15 of planning permission CB/24/01325/FULL (Demolition of dwelling and erection of a replacement four bedroom detached self-build dwelling.) Variation sought retrospectively to replace the approved plans to allow for alterations to the fenestration layout. Additional detail provided to satisfy conditions 3, 7, 10 and 13.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Addy. Resolved that the Council has no comment on planning application 26/00412. Carried.

- iii. CB/26/00119/OUT - Land to the south of the former Henlow Greyhound Stadium, Bedford Road, Lower Stondon, SG16 6EA - Outline Application: development for a 10 pitch Traveller site. Reserved matters for appearance and landscaping. Comments by 27th March.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 26/00119. Carried.

- b. To confirm attendance at meeting with Clarion Housing Group regarding proposals for development of land between Chapel Rd and Hoo Road - Wednesday 29th April 5pm.**

It was agreed that the Clerk and Councillors Parsons, Wright and Avrili would attend.

- c. Update on letter sent to CBC regarding what steps the local authority is taking to counter developer claims that the authority has no five-year land supply in place.**

The Clerk reported that a response to our letter was received today and stated the following:

To provide some background and clarify to some of the misunderstandings in your letter the Council has a very comprehensive understanding of the developments being undertaken in Central Bedfordshire and their impact on the Council's 5YHLS.

We undertake -

- 1. Site surveys – If a site has detailed planning approval it is surveyed on a bi-annual basis to establish if groundworks have commenced, the number of dwelling completions, the number of plots under construction and the pace of delivery. These surveys involve site visits, discussions with sales officers and desk-based cross referencing with NHBC and Building Control reports. The information gathered is then used to update and adjust the delivery numbers in the trajectory.*
- 2. Information from developers - Site promoters and developers are contacted regularly for delivery information.*
- 3. Planning status and progress of applications - information on the progress of applications is also examined to help determine whether a site is deliverable or developable*

All the above information is reviewed and appraised by monitoring officers before a decision is made over where to place each site within the 5YHLS. This is often done in consultation with individual case officers. Where site-specific information is not available, average lead in times and build out rates are applied if they are appropriate. If clear evidence of deliverability cannot be demonstrated for a particular site, it is placed outside of the five-year supply period. This

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information is used to establish what the Council's 5YHLS position is which you correctly state is currently showing at 4.85 years of supply in the latest published Housing Trajectory.

The Council has successfully defended its 5YHLS supply position at a number of appeals and it is the normal for developers to try and undermine the Councils position as it has advantages to them in doing so. It is not that they have a greater understanding of the position. As the Council does not deliver most of the housing in Central Bedfordshire, we are reliant on the development sector to deliver housing and thereby maintain a 5YHLS.

However, while we do not have direct control over this issue, and are reliant on developers delivering new homes, I can assure you that the Council is taking proactive steps to seek to improve the 5YHLS position, which are set out below:

- A list of key priority planning applications and sites is being maintained and regularly reviewed and updated to ensure the applications progress towards resolution in a timely and positive way. This involves regular discussions between Planning Case Officers and Planning Managers and provides critical lines of focus towards assisting the Council's 5YHLS.*
- Further positive steps have been taken on the approach to s106 legal agreements for planning applications, which have received resolution for planning at DMC. There is now a requirement for a s106 to be finalised within six months of the granting of resolution from planning. This will ultimately lead to decision notices being issued more quickly and potentially have a positive impact the 5YHLS position moving forward.*
- There has been a concerted push towards entering into Planning Performance Agreements (PPA's) with developers, where appropriate. The PPA's assist with providing greater certainty on timescales for the planning application process and determination, dedicated officer support, with the overall aim of reducing risk of delays and providing for a more efficient application process. Mitigating the risk of delays with planning applications and determining within agreed time parameters of the PPA's is anticipated to have a positive impact on the 5YHLS moving forward.*
- Discussions have been held with the Council's Assets Team to seek to expedite bringing to market future phases of Chase Farm Arlesey, which is critical to the Council's 5YHLS.*
- Training has been provided to DMC members on the 5-year housing land supply position.*

The Council are hopeful positive progress will continue to be made in increasing the 5YHLS as a result of these actions. Regular discussions will continue to take place internally between Senior Management and Officers to keep abreast of the ongoing position.

The Clerk was asked to consider an MPC response.

d. Update on letter to Alistair Strathern MP to highlight concerns regarding sections within the proposed NPPF 2025 (sections H02, H03 and Annex D) that cover housing calculations and supply.

The Clerk needs to discuss this with Councillor Marsh.

1270. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

- Green Infrastructure Plan draft.
Pictures of Meppershall to be on the front.
- Extension to Conservation Area.

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- The Clerk and Councillor Parsons to respond to queries raised.
- iii. Design Guide.
Clerk to send Design Guide to Mr Read and Mr Pain for updating.
- iv. Draft Plan.
Mr Read has offered to review this for us.

1271. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. Update on Highways issues.

- Mr Hirst has reported all potholes (over 25) on Shefford Road on Fix My Street. Many have been flagged as already reported and all are showing as to be investigated. Mr Hirst noted that of all the potholes he has reported only 2 have been fixed. *The Clerk was asked to seek resolution directly from CBC.*

1272. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Update on Allotment Access Track Agreements.

The Clerk advised that to date we have not had any responses or payments. Council asked for a full report at the next meeting.

b. Update on allotments.

The Clerk reported that all payment notifications have been issued. 5 new plot holders have been issued agreements and we currently have 4 vacant plots.

c. To agree works to ORM Community Orchard.

The Clerk reported that all trees in the Community Orchard have been pruned except the plums that will be done in the summer. Only 5 trees were dug around and fertilised by volunteers due to the heavy work required however our grounds maintenance contractor has offered to do this for us.

d. Update on all other environment and leisure issues.

- Mr Hirst and the Clerk have stopped use of the pitch for a three-week period to allow for required maintenance to be undertaken.

1273. STAFF MATTERS

a. Allotment Co-ordinator update.

Only one application received so far. The Clerk will arrange interviews after she returns from holiday.

1274. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The ~~Chairman~~Chair closed the meeting at 9:25pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be 13th April 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

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- NP = Neighbourhood Plan
- ORM = Old Read Meadow Nature Reserve