

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 13TH APRIL 2026

biting. The resident has also been urged to report these issues to the Police on 101.

Councillors asked the Clerk to:

- *advise the local policing team of this issue,*
 - *ensure that new signage refers to dogs on leads, and*
 - *create a Dog Etiquette in Public Open Spaces article for the Messenger.*
- A resident has asked could anything be done with the wheelie bins outside the flats on Fildyke Road, which are making the road look very unsightly? The resident has suggested 'a wheelie home' could be created for them on the small bit of grass with a tree on it to make the village a little more attractive and charming.

Councillors asked the Clerk to pass this issue over to Grand Union / Amplius.

d. Members of the public raised the following questions and comments.

- A member of the public asked if there was any update on the Coneygate application? The Clerk advised that due to the requirement to provide the local planning authority additional reports during the summer of 2026 a decision on the application was not likely to be made soon. The Clerk also reported on the refusal of a planning application in Stondon for 115 new dwellings due to a lack of capacity at the Shillington Sewage Treatment Works that Meppershall also feeds into.

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:24pm.

1279. MINUTES

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

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

1280. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Procedures

- i. 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.

b. Health & Safety and Risk Management

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

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to receive and accept MC Risk Review Assessment for 2025-2026 and note that the actions are completed. Carried.

c. Consultations and meetings

- i. Update on meeting with Poppy Hill MAT Trustees and actions required.

Councillor Parsons attend a meeting with the Poppy Hill MAT Trustees and Senior Management Team who have requested support from the Parish Council. Councillor Parsons suggested that a small group of councillors meet with the Trust to assist with their current issues.

Proposed Cllr Parson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to set up Working Group to include the Clerk and Councillors Parson, Thompson, Avrili and Choksi. Carried.

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 13TH APRIL 2026

ii. Update on Police priority setting meeting.

The Clerk and Councillor Avrili reported that they had attended the Beds Police priority setting meeting on 1st April. The priority for the next 3 months will be anti-social vehicles. Whilst meeting with other parish representatives in Area 5 it was also suggested that the Area 5 parish meeting held before the Police meeting be re-scheduled. Clerk to work with other local Clerks on this. Councillor Choksi to attend next meeting on 8th July with the Clerk.

iii. To consider attendance at CBC General Purposes Committee Meeting on 17th April 9am where it is proposed that number of councillors for MPC is reduced from 10 to 9. Councillors noted that they had already objected to the proposed reduction in councillors for the Parish Council. *The Clerk was asked to attend on behalf of MPC.*

d. 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.

e. IT and Communications

i. Update from the Clerk.

A report on website usage was circulated to councillors at the beginning of the month. Councillors were asked to provide feedback on the proposed new websites by the end of April.

1281. FINANCE

a. Purchase Orders / Contracts

i. To consider purchase of second-hand lawn mower (Mountfield model HP 454 plus mulcher attachment) for use at the allotments at cost of £50.

Councillor Wright did not participate in this agenda item.

The Clerk reported that Councillor Wright has offered MPC the opportunity to purchase his old lawn mower (Mountfield model HP 454 plus mulcher attachment) at a cost of £50 for use at the allotments.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to purchase Mountfield HP 454 and mulcher attachment at cost of £50 from Councillor Wright. (Local Government Act 1972 s.111). Carried.

ii. To confirm appointment of Internal Auditor.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved to appoint Auditing Solutions as Internal Auditor. (The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015). Carried.

iii. To approve proposal to issue a 10-year grounds and village maintenance contract effective from April 2027.

Councillor Thompson proposed that MPC considers the award of a "Light Touch Contract" in accordance with Section 9 of the Procurement Act 2023 (The Act), as amended, for the purposes of procuring services of a kind as specified in accordance with Section 9(2) of The Act, having regard to the nature of those services that they cannot be satisfied by provision by suppliers from outside the UK, are services supplied for the benefit of the Parish generally and the proximity of the preferred

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 13TH APRIL 2026

supplier and the recipient of those services is necessary and expedient for the effective supply of those services and Council avails itself of the provisions of Section 41(6), Schedule 5, Paragraph 7 of the Act:

- 7 The public contract concerns the supply of goods, services or works by the existing supplier which are intended as an extension to, or partial replacement of, existing goods, services or works in circumstances where—
 - (a) a change in supplier would result in contracting authority (The Parish) receiving goods, services or works that are different from, or incompatible with the existing goods or services of work, and
 - (b) the difference or incompatibility would result in disproportionate technical difficulties in operation or maintenance.

Notes to Council:

1. Whilst there are no direct penalties for not following the rules, non-compliance could lead to legal changes from potential suppliers who feel unfairly excluded from a contract tendering process. Such contractors would have 6 months to instigate legal proceedings from the letting of the contract directly.
2. Council could consider letting two contracts – one specifically for grass-cutting and one for all other works, but this may be subject to legal challenge as an attempt by Council to avoid reaching procurement thresholds.
3. We need to amend our Financial Regulations to refer to the Procurement Act 2023 and to include reference to Light Touch Contracts.
4. Works/Construction threshold: £5,372,609.
5. Goods and Services Threshold: £207,720 (quoted in The Act) [£214,904 quoted in some advice].
6. The thresholds apply to the cumulative amount of the contract over the term (Number of years let) and includes any potential extension periods, all renewal options and the threshold being the value INCLUDING V.A.T.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Secoded Cllr Wright. Resolved to amend Financial Regulations / Standing Orders and prepare to award a Light Touch Contract for grounds and village maintenance to Scotts Grounds Maintenance. Carried.

- iv. To approve all other purchase order requests.

None

b. Meppershall Escrow Funding request

- i. To consider request from Meppershall Village Hall to use Escrow funding for solar panel installation at the Village Hall.

The Clerk had circulated the Business Case for solar panel installation at the Village Hall with meeting papers and representatives of the Village Hall Trustees and Committee were invited by the Chairman to answer questions from councillors on the project. *Councillors agreed to support the funding request and asked the Clerk to write to the holder of the Escrow funds to advise of this.*

c. Grants

- i. To approve purchase and gifting of laptop to Meppershall Gnomes.

Councillor Thompson did not participate in this agenda item.

Proposed Cllr Avrili/Secoded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve purchase and gifting of laptop to Meppershall Gnomes (Local Government Act 1972 s.137). Carried.

- ii. To approve grant funding request from Meppershall Messenger for £1000.

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 13TH APRIL 2026

Councillor Thompson did not participate in this agenda item.

Proposed Cllr Parsons/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to approve grant to Meppershall Messenger for £1000 and that the payment be added to the meeting payment list (Local Government Act 1972 s.142). Carried.

d. Document approval

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

Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to approve bank reconciliations and statements Current a/c 214, Savings a/c 77, and MultiPay 260326. Carried.

e. 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 Avrili/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 31st March 2026				
BACS 1165	SM Cross	Meppershall Plates	£150.00	
BACS 1171	The Pitchmark Group t/a Tufix	Line Fix socket refills	£77.97	MultiPay
DD04-2603	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/03/26)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD01-2603	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (16/03/26)	£399.14	Direct Debit
DD06-2603	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay monthly fee (26/03/26)	£3.00	MultiPay
DD07-2603	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/03/25)	£5.40	MultiPay
Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc				
DD03-2604	Everflow	Water (08/05/26 to 07/06/26) (16/04/2026)	£53.15	Direct Debit
DD08-2604	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/04/26)	£4.50	MultiPay
DD09-2604	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges March 2026	£7.00	Direct Debit
Payment requests received before agenda published				
BACS 1166	Scotts Ground maintenance	ORM - Drainage installl	£1,500.00	
BACS 1167	Rialtas	Annual software and maintenance license	£504.00	
BACS 1168	Scotts Ground maintenance	Pitch maintenance	£1,476.78	
BACS 1169	Scotts Ground maintenance	Various - grass cutting	£1,650.67	
BACS 1170	Safety 360 UK Ltd	First Aid at Work Training - AM & RA & SPC	£891.00	

1282. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration.

- i. CB/26/00714/NMA - Land Opposite 34 To 42, Shefford Road - Non-material amendment to planning permission CB/19/03877/RM (Approval of reserved matters (external appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) for the demolition of 59 Shefford Road and associated buildings and the erection of 145 dwellings pursuant to outline planning permission CB/17/03887/OUT.) Amendment sought to the bund, to reflect the existing situation on-site and additional landscaping to deter the ability to walk on the bund.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved that the Council has no objection to planning application 26/00714. Carried.

- ii. CB/26/00905/VOC - Land North of Fildyke Road - Removal of condition number 4 and 5 of planning permission CB/25/01405/FULL (Erection of four dwellings (Use Class C3)

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 13TH APRIL 2026

including two bungalows with associated private drive and landscaping). Variation sought that a financial contribution via S106 be more appropriate.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council objects to planning application 26/00905. Carried.

- iii. CB/26/00779/FULL - 12 Taylors Close, SG17 5NH - Erection of an infill extension, and pitched roof over garage, with flat roof window. Comments by 28th April.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved that the Council has no comment on planning application 26/00779. Carried.

1283. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

- i. Green Infrastructure Plan draft.
Clerk to Chase BRCC for final GIP.
- ii. Extension to Conservation Area.
The Clerk and Councillor Parsons to respond to queries raised and chase contractor.
- iii. Design Guide.
Clerk to complete.
- iv. Draft Plan.
Mr Read has reviewed the Plan and some changes made. Councillor Marsh is reviewing questionnaire data for inclusion in the plan to support policies. Clerk to contact Chapman Planning regarding updating census data and about the First Homes policy.

1284. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. Update on Highways issues.

- The Central Bedfordshire Highways Improvement plan for the coming year includes no improvements in Meppershall. This is disappointing.
- Councillor Avrili reported that the VAS at the village entrance on Shefford Road is not working.

1285. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. To consider set up / search for volunteers to join Dog and Speed Watches.

The Clerk reported that Beds Police are eager to encourage more volunteers into Dog and Speed Watch groups. Whilst Meppershall has a Speed Watch group they need new members.

- The Dog Watch scheme encourages dog owners and walkers to be the extra eyes and ears within the community with the opportunity to spot anything out of place or suspicious while walking the dog – and report it. This includes:
 - suspicious activity
 - graffiti and vandalism
 - nuisance vehicles and speeding
 - antisocial behaviour
 - fly-tipping
 - dog fouling
 - hare-coursing
 - dog-related incidents

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 13TH APRIL 2026

- abandoned vehicles
- Lost and found dogs (Dog Watch members can also take part in helping to find lost dogs and reunite owners with found dogs. Beds Police work with DogLost. Beds Police provide ongoing support, an induction and training, as well as a high viz jacket, attack alarm, torch and notebook.
- **Speed Watch** is an educational and awareness raising initiative aimed at highlighting the impact of speeding. Groups attend roadside sessions with Speed Indication Devices (SIDs) and record details of vehicles exceeding the speed limit. This information is then submitted to Beds Police for processing of advisory letters to be sent out to speeding motorists. The data collected will also assist with the implementation of longer-term solutions for traffic calming. We need a minimum of 4 volunteers to get a speed watch group up and running. Volunteers must complete a minimum of two sessions every month. Beds Police provide all the training and equipment needed for each session and will provide ongoing support at the roadside.

To Clerk was asked to advertise the need for volunteers for these schemes.

b. Update on proposed litter pick on 18th April and any actions required.

The litter pick preparations are complete with the Charity Café providing drinks to volunteers.

c. Update on Allotment Access Track Agreements.

The Clerk advised that to date we have had 4 agreements completed and invoices paid. *The Clerk was asked to write to those who have not responded.*

d. Update on allotments.

The Clerk reported that only a few plot invoices remain outstanding and these are being chased. A few plot holders have given up their plots, but this was expected after sending out inspection letters.

e. To agree works to ORM Community Orchard.

The Clerk reported that drainage works have been completed and hedging plants moved from the allotments to ORM along the ditch perimeter. The Community Orchard trees have all been fertilised and dug around and bark chippings laid around them.

f. Update on all other environment and leisure issues.

- Canes to hold up the newly planted hedging in Centenary Field have been removed by children. Some have been replaced by the Clerk, but additional ones now required.
- The Clerk and Mr Hirst are keeping an eye on the play area surfacing edges.
- Dogs have been seen in both the fenced toddler play area and the main children play areas. The Clerk will include this in the dog etiquette article she is planning to write.

1286. STAFF MATTERS

a. Allotment Co-ordinator update.

The Clerk to arrange interview with the candidate and Councillor Merryweather.

b. To confirm loan of Stondon Parish Council Community Engagement Officer to assist with Meppershall Events.

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved that the Council confirms with Stondon Parish Council the loan of their Community Engagement Officer, Mrs Sarah Hossack, to assist with event planning etc. Carried.

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 13TH APRIL 2026

1287. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting at 9:25pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be 11th May 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