

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, MEPPERSHALL ON MONDAY 20TH JULY 2026

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

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

1319. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. Councillor Zavacky advised he may arrive late.

1320. 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 Avrili/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to extend the meeting finish time beyond 2 hours if required. Carried.
- c. Other information.
None.

1321. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

1322. PUBLIC SESSION

At 7:10pm 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
 - None present.
- c. Questions from the public sent to the Clerk.
 - Anti-social behaviour in the Village Hall carpark - Resident has reported anti-social behaviour in the car park of the village hall late at night into the early hours of the morning and is requesting assistance with the issue. A group of (presumably youths) are visiting the car park with their cars and creating a disturbance with loud music up to 3am in the morning depositing their rubbish comprising of used cans of gas, plus drinks cans and bottles. This has been referred to the police by our neighbours but so far they have been at best reluctant to attend. Residents have approached the village hall chairman to see what can be done about it. *Clerk has contacted the local policing team and written to MVH for CCTV images. Councillors advised that the resident needs to ensure that all issues of ASB are reported to Beds Police via 101 and that they make a complaint to MVHT.* Mr Hirst noted that he has seen a significant increase in the number of nitrous oxide bottles dumped in around the village but mostly around the

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village hall car parking areas. This also needs to be reported to the Police. *Clerk to put up social media articles on use of nitrous oxide and include in Messenger.*

- **Unauthorised commercial use of the MUGA on Saturday mornings** - Residents have complained about weekly use of the MUGA by a fitness class on Saturday mornings who should be using village hall lands for their classes. Their use means that residents are unable to use the space. *Clerk to write to MVHT for clarification and contact the fitness class.*
 - A resident has asked if MPC can investigate the sporadic delivery of post to households in the village as it often comes in bulk 7-10 apart. Councillors believe that Royal Mail have a lack of staff and are making cost savings by longer delivery times for 2nd class post. *Clerk was asked to contact the Ward Councillor and MP to see if they can get answers from Royal Mail.*
 - The Mid Beds Cancer Support Group would like access to a projector, screen and WIFI extender for use in their meetings, as MPC is considering purchase of same items, could we bring forward purchase and allow them to borrow when required? *Clerk to add to purchase requests.*
- d. Members of the public raised the following questions and comments.
- None

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7:37pm.

1323. MINUTES

- a. To receive and approve distributed minutes of the Statutory Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 8th June 2026.
Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the minutes of the Meeting of Meppershall Parish Council held on Monday 8th June 2026 are an accurate record of the proceedings and that they be signed by the Chair. Carried.

1324. PROCEDURES, CONSULTATIONS & LEGAL

a. Working Group meeting updates

- i. To receive minutes and proposals from Community Engagement WG:
1. To approve summer holiday children's activity event (27/08 – 10am).
 2. To approve Meppershall Eats event (August bank holiday weekend).
 3. To approve Christmas Tree Light Switch on event (28/12).
 4. To approve Christmas Pensioners Lunch (17/12 – 12noon – 2:30pm).
 5. To approve Meppershall Gala (10/07/2027).

Council received minutes of the Community Engagement WG meeting minutes.

Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that Council approve proposed events. Carried.

b. Consultations and meetings

- i. To agree response to CBC consulting on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report.
Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that response to CBC SEA Scoping Report consultation be delegated to the Clerk. Carried.
- ii. To consider and agree delegation of response to CBC consultation on submitted sites for inclusion in the Local Plan.

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Councillors agreed that details about the consultation need to be circulated to residents in all formats possible so that as many people as possible respond. The Clerk has already written an article for the Messenger, but it was agreed that a leaflet be produced together with a dedicated page on the MPC website.

Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved that response to CBC consultation on submitted sites for inclusion in the Local Plan is delegated to the Clerk, Councillors Avrili, Thompson and Choksi and Mr Pain and that costs for leaflets etc are incurred as required. Carried.

c. Stocken House

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

Still no update since the Clerk spoke to Davidsons who advised that they are waiting for CBC Planning to decide on the variation of condition planning applications submitted. Clerk to chase for update.

d. IT and Communications

- i. Update from the Clerk.

A report on website usage was circulated to councillors at the beginning of the month. The Clerk has not worked on the website but plans to do this over the summer.

1325. FINANCE

a. To approve transfer of Gregory Close play area from CBC to MPC post refurbishment.

CBC is proposing:

- Meppershall Parish Council work with HAGS (who is our preferred play equipment provider) to propose some designs for an update of this play area
- Designs to be achievable within the available budget of £23,000
- Designs to meet the specification for a LEAP (5 pieces of equipment suitable for 6–10-year-olds, including a large multi-play unit, swinging equipment, a rotating item, a balancing item and a non-standard challenging item) – see attached Children’s Play Provision Guidance for further guidance
- Once the play area designs have been received and the preferred options have been selected (jointly by CBC play team and MPC), MPC to consult with residents on the refurbishment options
- CBC then deliver the selected new play area via a Direct Award to HAGS via the ESPO framework
- Once the new play equipment has been installed CBC to arrange for the play area to be transferred to MPC. Please note that CBC will be paying for the refurbishment but does not have any funding to transfer to MPC for future maintenance or refurbishments.

Accepting transfer will mean that MPC will be responsible for future maintenance however it will also mean that all play areas in the village are owned and maintained by the Parish Council, which is one of our objectives.

Proposed Cllr Merryweather/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to approve transfer of Gregory Close play area to MPC post refurbishment. Carried.

b. To approve delegation of signing best value electricity contract to Clerk.

Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to approve delegation of signing best value electricity contract to Clerk with assistance from the Chair. Carried.

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c. Purchase Orders / Contracts

- i. Event 'no parking' and 'resident only parking' signage.
Stands £20.93+VAT each and interchangeable signs £27.11 each. Stands are stackable.
Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to approve purchase of 4 stands and 4 interchangeable signs (Local Government Act 1972, s.145). Carried.
- ii. Event branded gazebo.
The total cost is under £1k which includes weights, a wheeled bag and vinyl lettering on the front valance.
Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to approve purchase branded gazebo for use at events (Local Government Act 1972, s.145). . Carried.
- iii. Event first aid kit.
Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to approve purchase of event first aid kit (Local Government Act 1972, s.145). Carried.
- iv. Food hygiene course for Clerk.
Proposed Cllr Choksi/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved to approve attendance at food hygiene course for Clerk (Local Government Act 1972, s.111). Carried.
- v. Pitch paint.
Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Choksi. Resolved to approve purchase of pitch lining paint (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19). Carried.
- vi. Defib replacement battery (and replacement signage).
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Avrili. Resolved to approve purchase of defib replacement battery (Public Health Act 1936 s234). Carried.
- vii. To approve all other purchase orders.
 1. Rialtas Web access - £212 full year (£141.33 this year) +VAT
Clerk is proposing to move Rialtas from desk-based system to web access. A data processing agreement is included and will require MPC approval and signature.
Benefits include:
 - No need to upgrade.
 - Data is backed up and held by Rialtas.
 - Can access Rialtas from anywhere.*Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve move to Rialtas Alpha accounts to web version and overspend on budget line (Local Government Act 1972, s.111). Carried.*
 2. Replacement battery for line marker.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Wright. Resolved to approve purchase of replacement battery for line marker by Mr Hirst (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19). Carried.
 3. Projector, screen and WIFI extender.
Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve purchase of projector, screen and WIFI extender for use by MPC and approved community groups at MVH (Local Government Act 1972, s.111). Carried.

d. Document approval

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

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Proposed Cllr Avrili/Seconded Cllr Merryweather. Resolved to approve bank reconciliations and statements MultiPay 26.06.2026, Savings a/c 080 and Current a/c 217.

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 Thompson/Seconded Cllr Russell. 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	
Payments made prior to meeting date including direct debits, standing orders, salaries etc				
DD01-2606	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (15/06/26)		Direct Debit
DD01-2607	Standard Life	Clerk ER Pension Contribution (13/07/26)		Direct Debit
DD03-2607	Everflow	Water (08/08/26 to 07/09/26) (20/07/2026)	£1,076.56	Direct Debit
DD04-2606	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/06/26)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD04-2607	Smarty Mobile	Clerk Mobile Plan (19/07/26)	£7.20	MultiPay
DD06-2606	Lloyds Bank	MultiPay monthly fee (26/06/26)	£3.00	MultiPay
DD07-2606	Smarty Mobile	Allot Co-ord Monthly Mobile Plan (28/05/25)	£5.40	MultiPay
DD08-2607	Smarty Mobile	Env Officer Mobile Plan (3/07/26)	£4.50	MultiPay
DD09-2607	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges June 2026	£7.00	Direct Debit
FA04-2607	Mr R Hirst	Salary (20/07/26)		
FA05-2607	NEST	RH ER Pension Contribution		Direct Debit
FA06-2607	A Marabese	Monthly Salary (20/07/26)		
Payment requests				
BACS 1185	CPRE Bedfordshire	Centenary Oak Plaque	£30.00	
BACS 1186	Scotts Ground Maintenance Ltd	Clearing allotment plots & waste removal	£456.00	
BACS 1187	Amazon Business EU Sarl	5 x Box files	£17.88	MultiPay
BACS 1188	Amazon Business EU Sarl	5 reams printer paper	£25.98	MultiPay
BACS 1189	Amazon Business EU Sarl	Dog Poo Bags x 57 rolls	£35.35	MultiPay
BACS 1190	Amazon Business EU Sarl	12inch rebar states	£22.98	MultiPay
BACS 1191	Start Traffic Ltd	VAS posts, endcaps and clips	£632.32	MultiPay
BACS 1192	Amazon Business EU Sarl	Dog Poo Bags x 57 rolls	£30.36	MultiPay
BACS 1193	R & M Trading Ltd (via Amazon)	Replacement tap	£23.97	MultiPay
BACS 1194	Communtiy Heartbeat Trust	Defib battery and signage	£403.20	
BACS 1195	First Fence Limited	Allotment fencing materials	£6,297.47	
BACS 1196	Rebecca Webb	Allotment deposit return	£41.90	
BACS 1197	Net World Sports	CF Pitch Paint	£190.83	MultiPay
BACS 1198	Scotts Ground Maintenance Ltd	June Grounds maintenance	£1,994.73	
BACS 1199	BATPC	Affiliation fees 2026-27	£611.00	
BACS 1200	Meppershall Village Hall	Booking for Pensioners Christmas Lunch	£99.20	

Note of Income received:

Income			
08/06/2026		Allotment Rent	£32.40
15/06/2026		Allotment Rent & Deposit	£92.40
17/06/2026		Allotment Deposit	£60.00
22/06/2026		Allotment Rent	£32.40
30/06/2026		Allotment Deposit	£60.00
30/06/2026	Regina Caeli	Green Space Hire	£778.75

1326. PLANNING AND HOUSING

a. Applications since last Council meeting for consideration.

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- 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. (amendments of change to site location and updated documentation to address concerns raised by the consultees).

Proposed Cllr Thompson/Seconded Cllr Parsons. Resolved that the Council repeat its previous objection to development on this site. Carried.

b. Planning Appeals for consideration.

- i. App Ref: 6011001 - 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) 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 Wright. Resolved that the Council repeat its previous objections to removal of footpath requirement for this application. Carried.

1327. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

- i. Extension to Conservation Area.
Clerk in process of responding to queries.
- ii. Design Guide.
This is with the Clerk and in progress.
- iii. Draft Plan.
Councillor Marsh has completed review of the questionnaire data and reviewing the data output against policies. Census data to be updated by NP Consultant Chapman Planning

1328. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

a. VAS installation update

Mr Hirst to liaise with Mr Cooper of Gravenhurst PC to arrange installation. It was also noted that the VAS on Shefford Road at the village gateway was not working. *Clerk to report to CBC.*

b. Update on concerns regarding footpath installation from Poppy Gardens to Crackle Hill

Contractors due to start work on 18th August. Clerk and Mr Hirst to be on site to meet contractors on day one to ensure MPC driveway access is not affected by works Clerk to try and contact contractor before. The Clerk will try to contact the contractor before works are due to start on site.

c. Update on Highways issues.

- Mr Hirst to report potholes on Chapel Road via Fix My Street.

1329. ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

a. Update on complaint to Anglian Water about water pressure in village.

Anglian Water have confirmed that the 'perfect storm' has happened:

- Water Tower taken out of use to inspect the quality of drinking water (non-negotiable).

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- Water main in Campton damaged 6 months ago. Repairs not possible due to health and safety concerns.
- Summer demand for water during the constant heat.
- Chicksands site using too much water.

What's the resolution?

- The Water Tower will be back in use at the beginning of August.
- 200mtrs of new water mains will be installed in Campton starting on circa 10th August. This will take 4 weeks to complete.
- Chicksands told to ramp down usage.

So, in summary by the end of August / beginning of September the low / no pressure Issues in the village will be resolved. We remain in contact with Anglian Water and will provide updates if the situation changes.

b. Update on Allotment Access Track Agreements.

The Clerk advised that 4 agreements are outstanding and documents and letters resent to them with no responses. Clerk to send another letter and one to the occupier

c. Update on allotments including any actions.

Currently have two free plots. Scott's GM continue to cut the grass, and the Clerk and Mr Hirst recommend that this continues. Clerk to investigate extension of water lines with contractors. Clerk and Mr Hirst are planning an allotment inspection in August.

d. To consider request to store Shefford Town Council water bowser at Allotments.

Proposed Cllr Wright/Seconded Cllr Thompson. Resolved that the Council agrees to store Shefford Town Council water bowser at the Allotments. Carried

e. Update on ORM including any actions.

The Clerk reminded councillors that the Community Orchard will need pruning in August / September.

f. Update on Centenary Field including any actions.

Mr Hirst has reported that children continue to climb over the fencing of the pitch despite notices and paint applied to deter them.

Our grounds maintenance contractor is prioritising filling holes and sunken earth on Centenary Field and will then level of the pitch and the public areas. We will need to reseed areas and carry out selective weed spraying.

g. To consider organising CPR/AED training for residents via EAAA.

Councillors requested that we try to arrange training on a Saturday morning to encourage greater participation especially from younger residents.

h. Update on all other environment and leisure issues.

Mr Hirst has requested that we investigate cost and funding for nets to be installed behind the pitch goals to prevent balls going outside the fenced area and also floodlights to allow use in the evening. It was also noted that the fence is moving in certain areas due to the dry weather and ground around the posts.

1330. STAFF MATTERS

a. Allotment Co-ordinator update.

The Clerk was asked to start a recruitment process again.

b. To approve recruitment of Community Engagement Officer.

Deferred to September meeting.

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1331. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting at 9:58pm and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be on 14th September 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