

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT
THE LOWER SCHOOL, HIGH STREET, MEPPERSHALL ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2009

PRESENT Councillors Chapman (in the Chair), Bryant, Castle, Collins, Foskett, Merryweather, Parsons, Sykes and Waite. Also present Unitary Councillor Brown, 2 members of the public and the Clerk

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillor Crossley and Unitary Councillor Burt

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from members, declarations and the nature thereof in relation to any item on this agenda.

(a) **Personal interest**, where a decision on the matter in hand would affect the member, their partner, relatives or close friends, a body employing those persons, any firm in which they are a partner and any company of which they are directors. Any corporate body in which those persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £5,000 or any body in which such persons hold a position of general management or control.

(b) **Prejudicial interest**, where a member of the public (who has knowledge of the circumstances) would view the member's personal interest as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgement of the public interest

No interests were declared

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 16 July 2009 at the Lower School, High Street, Meppershall are attached to these minutes but not re-circulated

At this point the Chairman will suspend proceedings allow a period of up to 30 minutes to receive reports from the Unitary Councillors and to enable members of the public to question Councillors or make observations.

Councillor Brown reported from Central Bedfordshire on developments within the LDF, such as standardisation of building design. He further reported on the landfill situation at Stewartby which may become more widely used – a decision is to be made on 14 September. He finally advised that the Police Superintendent covering the local area has been complaining about the small police presence and is seeking premises for a 'police base'

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

5. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

5A PLANNING AND HOUSING

5A(a) Planning applications pending

i. 05/01366/SE73 - Land between 92 & 112 Fildyke Road Removal of footpath provision

5A(b) Approvals/Refusals/Withdrawals Received

5A(c) Appeals Pending

5A(d) Recent Applications

- I CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE/09/05426/FULL 21 High Street, Meppershall External flue to side elevation

5A(e) Other Planning Matters

i

5B FINANCE

i Audit

The accounts to 31 March are currently with the External Auditors and awaiting signing off. On receipt any comments made and those of the Internal Auditor are to be considered by the Finance Working Party
RESOLVED - noted

ii Victim Support

A copy of a letter from the Area Manager requesting assistance in the form of a donation is attached for consideration
RESOLVED - that in accordance with this Council's policy, no support should be given to a national charity

5C HIGHWAYS & LIGHTING

i Highway Parish Liaison

Councillor Bryant reported that a Liaison meeting was due, also that one of the projects put forward for the Partnership Scheme (see below) has already been carried out (Orchard Close)

ii Shefford Hill Footpath

Following the last meeting Councillor (CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE) Brown ascertained that the necessary documentation had not been completed in respect of the provision of the necessary land for the footpath, but that as soon as the formalities have been completed, the necessary signage will be erected. It was further reported that the documentation has been completed and the signage will be provided
RESOLVED - noted

iii Enhanced Parish Partnership Scheme 2009/2010

The schedule produced by Councillor Bryant for the last meeting has been sent to Amey but in the absence of confirmation a request for confirmation and possibly a timescale for the necessary work has also been sent.
RESOLVED - noted

iv Additional off road parking in Flldyke Road

No further news is available concerning a start date and a written request for an indication of the expected (hoped for) is awaiting response.
RESOLVED - noted

5D ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE

5D(a) Fosters Field

- i **Lighting of the teenage area**
The order for the ambient lighting has been passed to the suppliers and an installation date is awaited
Councillor Castle reported that he was in touch with the suppliers and was arranging for a site meeting where he would indicate the precise location for the column
RESOLVED - noted

5D(b) Play Equipment Annual Inspection & Maintenance

- i The report has been passed to Clements Construction with a request for an estimate of costings prior to the work being put in hand.
RESOLVED that consideration be given to using the services of a professional play equipment maintenance company to run a quarterly inspection of all equipment and the present weekly inspection be reappraised as to its scope and extent and that copies of the RoSPA Pamphlets EN1176 and 1177 be obtained for reference purposes
- ii A copy of a letter from S & C Slatter Ltd relating to the maintenance of bark areas is attached for interest/consideration
RESOLVED - noted

5D(c) Old Road Meadow

- i **Golf Balls**
It was reported through Councillor Castle that a number of golf balls had been discovered in various different gardens in Lyspitt Common and the assumption was that these flying golf balls were the result of activity in Old Road Meadow and thus. The Clerk spent time in the Meadow but was unable to trace any evidence of golfing activity (divot marks etc.) The conclusion reached was that a more likely explanation would be a youth with a catapult either in a garden in Brookside or on the field next to The Mow.
The Chairman confirmed that he has had an occasional golf ball in his back garden which would be even more impossible to reach from Old Road Meadow.
The overall conclusion reached was that children were probably at the root of the problem armed with a catapult
RESOLVED - noted

- 5(D)ii **Leylandii**
There are two Leylandii trees at the top of the meadow, one on Council land and the other in the garden of No 14 Lyspitt Common. A quotation from Steve Dear Tree Services for the felling of both trees has been accepted at £180 of which the Parish Council will be liable for £100 and the work to be carried out on 8 September.
RESOLVED - noted

- 5(D)iii **Weed Control**
Following the recent spraying exercise, Ian Hanglin of Complete Weed Control has written suggesting a 2 visit spraying plan - a copy of his letter is attached to these minutes but not re-circulated
RESOLVED - that the suggestion be adopted for the future

6. OTHER MEETINGS

- 6i **CPRE Planning Training Day - "The Planning System How it Works"**
The Rufus Centre Monday 28 September Cost £25 incl sandwich lunch 9 to 4
RESOLVED - noted

- 6ii **Nadine Dorries MEP - Tourism and the Environment in Mid Beds**
Marston Vale Forest Centre Saturday 26 September 2 to 4
RESOLVED - noted
- 6iii **Lower School Governors' meeting** - Councillor Bryant reported that Ms G Smith had been appointed as temporary Head for a year and a permanent appointment would be made for the commencement of the school year commencing 2010
RESOLVED - noted
7. **MID BEDFORDSHIRE AREA YOUTH FUNDING**
The Clerk is holding an application pack for the provision of loan finance to be completed by a qualifying group
RESOLVED - noted
8. **SWINE FLU PANDEMIC CHECK ON BURIAL CAPACITY**
Copies of letters from Central Beds and from NHS Bedfordshire Trust are attached for information
RESOLVED - noted
9. **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**
Further information from The Boundary Committee regarding the Review of Electoral Arrangements is attached
10. **PARISH PLAN**
A Questionnaire has been received from BRCC on progress with the Plan which the Clerk will progress
RESOLVED - noted
- 11 **GREEN COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME**
A copy of a short questionnaire to be completed by interested councils is attached for return to CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL by 4th September,
RESOLVED - noted
12. **LEGAL ADVICE**
The Solicitors Code of Conduct 2007 requires various matters to be covered on each occasion one of the solicitor's clients requests legal advice. The alternative is to enter into a Service Level Agreement with the solicitors - in this case Brignalls Balderston Warren - such a document has been drawn up and requires the signatures of the Chairman and Clerk are required to be appended thereto
RESOLVED - that the Chairman and Clerk should sign on behalf of the Council
13. **WRY CLOSE ALLOTMENT FIELD**
13i **Tenancy Agreements.** The existing Agreements and the version currently in use in Luton differ in only marginal respects - principally in the order in which the conditions are recorded. Since the Agreement establishes the Tenant's rights and privileges and provides for adjustments to the rental on an annual basis, there is no requirement for new Agreements to be prepared every year. A simple letter of demand will therefore be prepared and sent to each Tenant to arrive on or about 30 September requiring payment at the increased rate of £10 per plot or part of plot to be received before 30 October

- 13ii **Allotment Inspection 2009.** This was due to be carried out and the results advised to the Clerk
RESOLVED that the Clerk should be supplied with an up to date schedule of Allotment Holders together with a copy of the report on the Inspection (which it was agreed would be carried out on 3 September) so that where necessary suitable adjustments could be made to the standard letter
- 13iii **Licence Agreements** The Council is advised by its solicitors BBW (see agenda item 12 above) that the original Licence Agreements and the rights of way conferred remain current. The annual charge is only payable **on demand** and its non payment does not therefore invalidate the Licence which will continue in force until determined by the Council. The burden and benefits conferred by the Licence Agreement run with the Council and the owner of the specified property in the High Street. The owner, by the terms of the signed Licence Agreement admits that the right of way over the track is a continuing permission granted by the Council and thereby acknowledges that it is not possible to claim a prescriptive right, regardless of the number of years the annual fee has been neither demanded nor paid.
Councillors should note that there is no facility within the document to allow a variation or amendment to the amount of the annual fee - whether demanded or not.
RESOLVED - noted
14. **GRASS CUTTING**
- 14i **Current arrangement** There have been a number of allegations of unsatisfactory standards of work and a course of action should be determined taking into account the length of time remaining in the current season.
- 14ii **Tender Documentation for future years.** Grass cutting is carried out by an appointed contractor for the Parish Council who are acting as agents for principal authority. Whether or not supervision of the overall activity can be delegated to a contractor, responsibility for the type and frequency of cutting will remain at the discretion of the Parish Council. This detail must be clearly established and incorporated within the tender documentation distributed and the Council's very specific requirements need to be established in the very near future to enable tender documentation to be distributed to potential contractors next month.

There is an alternative which would be not to accept the invitation to carry out the Agency work and leave the verge cutting in the hands of Central Bedfordshire and just concentrate on the maintenance of the Parish Council's own land. This would represent a substantial saving to the Parish but would result in the number of cuts being restricted to either 6 or 8 in a year as opposed to the 14/16 visits of our current contractor

RESOLVED that:-

- a) the Council retains control over the grass cutting in and around the village
- b) the Clerk to supply a paper copy of the composite map and an electronic version of the pro-forma Tender Document
- c) Councillors Merryweather, Castle and Sykes to establish the Council's requirements for the different areas and amend the pro-forma so that the selected contractors can be approached.

15. **ORDERS FOR THE PAYMENT OF MONEY FOR AUTHORISATION**
Schedule for authorisation of payments is attached for Authorisation and Approval
RESOLVED - that the payments be approved and authorised.
16. **DATE & VENUE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**
The next meetings of the Parish Council will be on Wednesday 7 October 2009
and Wednesday 4 November 2009 at the Lower School