

MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD AT THE LOWER SCHOOL, MEPPERSHALL ON 7 OCTOBER 2009

PRESENT Councillors Chapman (in the chair), Bryant, Castle, Collins, Crossley, Foskett Merryweather, Parsons, Sykes and Waite, Unitary Councillor Birt, 6 members of the public and the Clerk

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Unitary Councillor Brown

1. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS** The Chairman introduced 2 guests to address the Council

P C Steve Busby of Bedfordshire Police gave brief details of the crime figures for the previous month which amounted to 4 burglaries mainly from outbuildings. The two main subjects (as usual) were vehicles speeding through the village and the problems of parked cars by the Post Office in the High Street and down Fildyke Road.

Cliff Andrews from BRCC came to explain the Green Infrastructure Plan and to seek the Council's support. He explained that in essence, a GI plan identifies existing environmental assets (including footpaths, bridleways, green spaces, nature reserves, playing fields, allotments, etc) and maps community aspirations for the future provision of such features. Although this planning exercise has particular relevance where housing/ employment growth is expected, it is a useful tool for getting a coherent voice as to the needs and aspirations of the community.

The Council expressed its support for the initiative and the Chairman took the opportunity to thank the speaker for all his assistance in establishing the Old Road Meadow Nature Reserve.

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

No interests were declared

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 2 September 2009 at the Lower School, High Street, Meppershall are attached to these minutes but not re-circulated

At this point the Chairman suspended proceedings to 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 Birt referred to the recent situation whereby the hedge on Shillington Road had been removed by the Landowner and he advised the meeting that proceedings were being instituted in respect of the unlawful removal of the hedge. Without being specific he also mentioned that instances had been identified where appointed officers had exceeded their authority

The problems of gardens being flooded following after short periods of heavy rain, particularly in Rectory Lane were once again raised by one of the residents. The cause is the fact that there is insufficient 'flow' due to the garden being a little below the level of the road. A further problem is the flooding of the road at the top of the High Street. where a new surface drain was installed at such a level that water flows around rather than down the drain in a sizeable stream and is a hazard for pedestrians.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising that are not on the current agenda

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
It is hoped that this matter will be discussed at a forthcoming meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Planning Authority
- ii. CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE/09/05426/FULL 21 High Street, Meppershall External flue to side elevation
RESOLVED – noted

5A(b) Approvals/Refusals/Withdrawals Received

5A(c) Appeals Pending

5A(d) Recent Applications

- I CB/09/06084/FULL Land rear of 30 Shefford Road – erection of bungalow with associated access
Councillors were concerned that the last application at this address was the acquiring of a small parcel of former agricultural land as an extension of the garden. and it now transpires that the sole purpose of that application was to provide sufficient land to enable this application to be made. Without the additional land being made part of the plot there would have been undoubted over-development of the plot. There appeared to be no planning regulations upon which objections could be made.
RESOLVED that the Clerk should make further investigations into both applications with particular reference to Development Grant liability on such an application.

Subsequently , and after consultation with members of the Planning Working Group, an objection was filed on the grounds that the application was a obvious attempt to manipulate the planning regulations for the benefit of an individual . The last application entered in respect of this property was CB/09/00909/FULL which sought permission for the change of use of a parcel of land to the rear of 30 Shefford Road from agricultural field to residential garden. That application was approved and the sole reason for it is now clear – it was to provide the necessary garden for the dwelling to be erected under this application which the existing garden at 30 Shefford Road could not support. Conditions attached to the approval of the 'change of use' application were primarily included 'to protect the amenities of adjacent occupiers and the character and appearance of the area' The implied future use of the land as an extension to the garden of the main property would have complied with those conditions but the Parish Council is of the opinion that the inclusion of a substantial property within the overall scheme at this stage puts a different complexion on the purpose of the original proposal.

If planning approval is forthcoming a Development Grant of in excess of £11,000 will be levied, 50% of which being earmarked for Leisure, Recreational Open Space and Green Infrastructure enhancement

5A(e) Other Planning Matters

- i There were no additional planning items for consideration

5B FINANCE

i Audit

The audit has now been completed and signed off. The reports of both the Internal and External Auditors will be considered by the Finance Working Party and recommendations made to the next meeting

RESOLVED - noted

5C HIGHWAYS & LIGHTING

i Highway Parish Liaison

Councillor Bryant reported on various Highways shortcomings that included the flooding in Rectory Road flooding, the broken manhole cover outside 55 High Street and the replacement of the damaged lighting column in the vicinity of the Village Hall.

RESOLVED - noted

ii Shefford Hill Footpath - Further developments

This item to be included as an agenda item until such time as the project has been completed

RESOLVED – noted

iv Additional off road parking in Fildyke Road

No further news is available as yet and a written request for an indication of the expected start date is awaiting response.

RESOLVED - noted

5D ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE

5D(a) Fosters Field

Lighting of the teenage area

Councillor Castle reported that he had spoken with the suppliers and awaits a confirmed installation date.

RESOLVED - noted

5D(b) Play Equipment Inspection & Maintenance

i Annual Inspection

The Clerk reported that the requested quotation from Clements Construction was still awaited

RESOLVED – noted

ii Future Inspections and Maintenance

At the last meeting it was proposed that a ‘professional’ inspection should be carried out on a quarterly basis whilst our own weekly inspection should continue but should be modified in all respects of content, delivery and follow-up.

Since this is primarily a Health and Safety issue it is now suggested that the Clerk and Councillor Castle should a new format to be referred for approval to the next Council meeting.

RESOLVED - noted

- iii **Fosters Field Maintenance Work**
This has not been satisfactorily carried out and requires further action
RESOLVED – that the work be put out to a different contractor for completion

- 5D(c) **Old Road Meadow**
Councillor Foskett advised that the grass would be cut in March 2010 –
RESOLVED - noted

- 5(D)i **Leylandii**
The Leylandii trees have been removed (despite the unwanted attention of a swarm of wasps whose nest was disturbed in the process) and her contribution towards the cost has been collected from the resident of 14 Lypitt Common and banked.
RESOLVED - noted

- 5(D)iii **Other matters**

- 6. **OTHER MEETINGS**

- 6i **Central Bedfordshire Launch of Public Consultation of the Design Guide**
Thursday 22 October at Chicksands at 3 pm
RESOLVED - noted

- 6ii **BATPC**
The Association's AGM will take place on Thursday 22 October at St Mark's Church Community Hall at 7.30 pm. The Clerk holds 2 copies of the relevant papers

- 7, **WRY CLOSE ALLOTMENT FIELD**
- 7i **Tenancy Agreements and Renewals.** The existing Agreements can be extended year on year by a suitably worded letter. This renewal letter will be sent as soon as the results of the recent inspection have been formalised and an updated schedule of Plot Holders established. Settlement of the increased annual fee of £10 per plot will still be required by the end of October. Unavoidable delays in the reporting on the Inspection have delayed the issue of renewal papers – when they are sent out a 10 day period for settlement will be standardised
RESOLVED – noted

- 7ii **Licence Agreements** The advice provided by the Council's legal advisers requires consideration by a small Working Group of Councillors and its findings and recommendations passed to the full Council at the next meeting
RESOLVED - that Councillors Collins, Crossley and Parsons should form a special Working Group for the purpose.

- 8. **GRASS CUTTING**
- 8i **Tender Documentation for future years.** Whilst it was the intention to have this document ready for approval at this meeting this has not proved possible as the Council's specific requirements of the appointed contractor have still not been established Councillor Sykes has produced an action plan for the Clerk to follow
RESOLVED noted

- 8ii **Current arrangement** There have been further allegations of unsatisfactory standards of work and a copy of the current Agreement is attached for information but not re-circulated The situation was discussed and in the light of the fact that the contract has now run its course and will not be renewed and the difficulty in establishing the precise nature of any breach of contract and its value (due to the simplistic nature of the current Agreement) it was **RESOLVED** that any shortcomings in the contractor's performance will be accepted as lessons learned and the new contract documents will be precise and specific in the Council's requirements

9 PARISH CLERK

9i **Remuneration.** Agreement has finally been reached on the pay settlement for the current year (commencing April 2009). The National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks jointly recommend that the salary scales of all part time and full time clerks be adjusted in accordance with the new spinal column points, an increase of 1%. The recommendation also covers adjustments to the annual leave entitlement and car allowances.

RESOLVED that the small increase should be applied.

9ii **Appraisal** The Clerk's Contract of Employment contains a requirement for an annual appraisal. This has not taken place in previous years and a procedure needs to be established.

RESOLVED that the Chairman should ascertain the modus operandi employed by other parish councils

10 HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

10i Councillor Parsons reported that little progress had been made with the Risk Assessment Annual Review but hoped that he would be in a position to report more fully to the next Council Meeting

RESOLVED - noted.

10ii Councillor Castle reported that matters under this heading had been covered in earlier agenda items but requested a report on the missing gate at the Fildyke Road end of Footpath 1. The Clerk advised that the landowner was less than enthusiastic about providing a gate since he was of the opinion that it was un-necessary.

RESOLVED - noted

11. ORDERS FOR THE PAYMENT OF MONEY FOR AUTHORISATION

Schedule of payments for Authorisation and Approval will be distributed at the Council Meeting

The schedule was distributed and the payments approved and authorised.

RESOLVED – noted

12. DATE & VENUE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The next meetings of the Parish Council will be on Wednesday 4 November 2009 and Wednesday 2 December 2009 at the Lower School