

**MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**  
**HELD AT THE LOWER SCHOOL, MEPPERSHALL ON 4 NOVEMBER 2009**

**PRESENT** Councillors Chapman (in the Chair), Bryant, Castle, Collins, Crossley, Foskett, Merryweather, Sykes and Waite. One member of the public, Unitary Councillor Birt and the Clerk

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**, Councillor Parsons, Unitary Councillor Brown

**1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS** – The Chairman introduced Mr Philip Jerred, Rural Housing Enabler with BRCC who explained that his function was to work as a broker identifying Social Housing Needs in rural areas and to investigate suitable sites and liaising with and between land owners, local authorities, property developers and Housing Associations with a view to meeting a need – if one exists and such a need is established by carrying out a Rural Housing Needs Survey. He has been made aware of the fact that there is an available plot of land in the village, but before proceeding he needs to see a copy of a Council minute confirming the Council's agreement. A copy of a 'General Briefing Paper for Parish Councils' is attached to these minutes but not re-circulated

**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

**3. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 7 October 2009 at the Lower School, High Street, Meppershall are attached to these minutes but not re-circulated

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes be accepted and adopted and they were signed by the Chairman

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

Councillor Birt apologised for the absence of Tony Brown who was due at another Parish meeting. There was little to report from Central Beds other than the fact that the initial feed back from the Boundaries Commission suggests that there are too many Councillors and some re-drawing of parish boundaries might be necessary to reduce those numbers.

The only other point of interest related to planning and the fact that as a result of recent adjustments from central government a further 4000 will need to be built in the Central Bedfordshire area. The result is that the sites under consideration through the LDF are being re-assessed and a decision as to suitability will be reached in January.

The problem of dog mess seems to be escalating again. The Chairman will be including a reference in the Messenger whilst the Clerk is to contact Clifton Parish Council for details of their collection initiative

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
- ii. CB/09/06084/FULL Land rear of 30 Shefford Road – erection of bungalow with associated access (See minutes of October meeting 5A(d)i. A copy of the likely Development Grant Contribution in the event of the application being approved is attached  
**RESOLVED** - noted

**5A(b) Approvals/Refusals/Withdrawals Received**

- iii. 09/05426/FULL 21 High Street, Meppershall External flue to side elevation  
Approval  
**RESOLVED** - noted

**5A(c) Appeals Pending**

- 09/00545 Woodview Nurseries  
**RESOLVED** – noted

**5A(d) Recent Applications**

- I CB/09/06287/FULL 39 Orchard Close pitch roof to single storey extension  
**RESOLVED** – no objections

**5A(e) Other Planning Matters**

**5B FINANCE**

- i **Audit**  
A meeting of the Finance Working Group convened on 29 October to consider the comments made by both Internal and External Auditors. These were of quite a minor nature. The Action Plan is in process of compiling  
**RESOLVED** – noted

**5C HIGHWAYS & LIGHTING**

- i **Highway Parish Liaison**  
Councillor Bryant reported that there is a broken storm drain needing repair outside 3 Shefford Road
- ii **Shefford Hill Footpath**  
It was reported that the correct signage is being erected soon and that the construction of the footpath is not now dependent on a 'safe' crossing over or under the A507
- iii **Additional off road parking in Fildyke Road**  
The Clerk was advised by Aragon shortly after the October Council meeting that they expected to start on the provision of the additional parking area in 4 to 5 weeks time.  
**RESOLVED** - that these matters be noted

**5D ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE**

**5D(a) Fosters Field**

- i **Lighting of the teenage area**  
Councillor Castle reported that the first contact from the installer gave him insufficient notice for him to change existing arrangements. Further contact awaited  
**RESOLVED** - noted

**5D(b) Play Equipment Inspection & Maintenance**

- i **Annual Inspection**  
The Clerk reported that a quotation had been received from Clements. This to be passed to the E & L Working Group for prioritizing
- ii **Future Inspections and Maintenance**  
The provision of a composite Maintenance was one of the projects that had to be held back - it will be on the December agenda
- iii **Fosters Field Maintenance Work**  
This has not been satisfactorily carried out and requires further action  
**RESOLVED** - noted

**5D(c) Old Road Meadow**

- 5(D)i** There were no matters to report  
**RESOLVED** - noted

**6. OTHER MEETINGS**

Councillor Crossley attended tyhe Central Beds 'Design for the Future Seminar from which he brought back a quantity of booklets which will be curculated anongst Councillors and retained by he Planning Working Group  
**RESOLVED** - noted

**6ii TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL CONFERENCE**

The Conference is taking place today but it is hoped that whatever hand-outs are made available will be sent through with a resume of the proceedings  
**RESOLVED** - noted

**7, WRY CLOSE ALLOTMENT FIELD**

**7i Tenancy Agreements and Renewals.**

It proved not possible to get these out at the agreed time. Once completed they will be delivered and a 10 day allowed for receipt of the relative rents  
**RESOLVED** - noted

**8. ORDERS FOR THE PAYMENT OF MONEY FOR AUTHORISATION**

Schedule of payments for Authorisation and Approval will be distributed at the Council Meeting  
**RESOLVED** that the payments be authorised and approved

**9. VENUE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

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

**MEPPERSHALL PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD IN CAMERA FOLLOWING THE**  
**ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2009**

**10. WRY CLOSE ALLOTMENT FIELD - Licence Agreements**

The advice provided by the Council's legal advisers (a copy of which is attached to these minutes but not re-circulated) has been considered by a small Working Group of Councillors and its findings and recommendations were communicated to the full Council by the Chairman. The legal points at issue are concerned with the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act as they affect Mrs Beryl Wright and whether the Parish Council, in the matter of the installation of a gate to the allotment track as a security measure against commercial fly-tipping, is acting in its capacity as a Public Authority or as a private land owner.

No definitive answer was forthcoming but there appear to be several alternatives open to the Council and the Chairman suggested that Councillors should give further individual consideration to the matter and a decision made at the next meeting.

Bearing in mind the reason for erecting the gate, its present location and its proximity to the nearest dwelling should be a sufficient deterrent to 'dumping' on the public (or unenclosed) part of the track.

The alternatives before the Council are:-

- a) To remove the gate altogether leaving the whole field open to risk.
- b) to leave the gate in its present location with normal access and a potential for the expense of a legal action
- c) to leave the gate in its present position and install solar powered electronic access incurring the cost of that installation
- d) to move the gate to a position further up the track beyond the point where residents of the properties in the High Street have access to the rear of their properties and extending the vulnerability of the track and the whole field to fly-tipping
- e) to move the gate to a position further up the track beyond the point where residents of the properties in the High Street have access to the rear of their properties and erect a fence along the trackside to the gate's new position, reducing the vulnerability to the track itself
- f) to move the gate to a position further up the track beyond the point where residents of the properties in the High Street have access to the rear of their properties, erect a fence along the trackside to the gate's new position and erect a lockable high barrier on the track against access by unauthorised commercial vehicles.

Overall to consider the likelihood of a problem arising with access by a disabled Allotment Holder at some time in the future.

**RESOLVED** - that the matter be carried forward to the next meeting of the Council in December

**11. GRASS CUTTING**

**11.a Tender Documentation for future years.**

The Clerk has produced a Tender Document for the Environment and Leisure Working Group to consider and amend as required

Councillor Sykes confirms that with a few amendments the proposed documentation would be acceptable. The amendments would be communicated to the Clerk for implementation.

**RESOLVED** - noted

**11.b Current arrangement** A decision was reached at the last meeting regarding the present Contractor to take no further action. Notwithstanding that decision, a proposal was presented to the Clerk to overturn the decision and to start legal proceedings. The Chairman advised the meeting that it is not, in general; possible to reverse a decision of the Council once recorded. He re-summarised the situation and the reasoning behind the Council's decision which was unanimously confirmed.

**12. CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE DESIGN GUIDE**

Councillor Foskett reported on a special meeting he attended on behalf of the Parish Council considering the Core Strategy and Development Management Plan relative to the inclusion of suggested sites to be included in the Plan. He advised the meeting that the proposal submitted for the development of the area to the rear of the Village Hall had been carried forward to the next consultation stage for further consideration.  
**RESOLVED** - noted

**13.a PARISH CLERK**

**Appraisal** The Chairman reported that he had not made any progress in his enquiries into the question of the Clerk's Annual Appraisal.

**13.b In the course of the exchanges of emails referred to at 11b above some comments and opinions were made that require resolution. Copies of the emails are attached for information.**

See 11b above