

MEPAL PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Karen Peck, email: mepalparishcouncil@msn.com tel 07842 499377
Chairman: Mr Brian Rollason, email: brianrollason.mpc@outlook.com

NOTICE OF MEETING: Full Parish Council Meeting
TIME: 19.30
DATE: Friday 7th February 2020
VENUE: Mepal Community Pavilion, Mepal

All members of the Council are hereby summoned to attend for the purposes of considering and resolving the business to be transacted at the meeting as set out below.

MEMBERS 4
VACANCIES 3
QUORUM 3

Members of the public and press were invited to address the Council at its Open Forum.

MINUTES

138/19 TO RECORD APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Parish Clerk, Karen Peck.

139/19 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

140/19 TO SIGN AND APPROVE MINUTES OF MEETINGS

The minutes from the full Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 14th January were approved and signed by Chairman Brian Rollason.

141/19 TO RECEIVE DISTRICT AND/OR COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Councillors Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip updated the Parish Council on the key points from their latest reports.

Citizens Advice

The council's Operational Services Committee on 20 January made the decision to totally cease funding the Citizens Advice service in East Cambridgeshire. Mark and two other councillors have 'called in' the decision as they believe it is seriously misguided. This means the decision will be suspended until the Full Council discusses it on 20 February. This is probably the biggest issue to report. Mark went on to explain that the council has received over £600,000 in total in Government grant for early intervention and prevention of homelessness which it has been holding back, in some cases for over two and a half years. The council is proposing to use this to pay for its own staff to replace the independent and well-respected Citizens Advice service operating out of the premises in Market Street in the centre of Ely. The premises, owned by the council and sitting alongside two neighbouring buildings also owned by the council, could then become available to lease out at market rent. A petition has been set up by a local resident at <https://www.change.org/p/east-cambridgeshire-district-council-reinstate-the-grant-to-ely-citizens-advice-bureau>

Linden Homes

Linden Homes have now submitted their application for Phase 2 of the development at the top of Mepal Road. This is for up to 173 homes, in line with Sutton's Neighbourhood Plan. (Otherwise it would have been for a lot more). Developing a neighbourhood plan did not have a net cost (grants are available), but it did take quite a lot of effort. Sutton was only the second area to have a plan. It was a real benefit because other things came out of it, i.e. provided input on other things. The grant money can even be used to pay for expert advice.

Questions from the public asked whether this would have helped Mepal in terms of the Brick lane development. Lorna Dupree explained that the new local plan that should have gone through last year had said that it was a site suitable for that number of houses, but this was pulled. There was voiced concern that, as this was a Suffolk housing association with plans for a large number of single occupancy homes, it rings alarm bells. The development as proposed would be a 20% increase in the size of the village which is of great concern to residents.

Lorna was reminded of the ongoing village concerns relating to access to the proposed Brick Lane development. Traffic speed surveys indicate that the traffic speed is too fast to have junction closer to A142, and Lorna is also still waiting for a reply to the question from the public at the last PC meeting last time regarding where the width of the road quoted was measured because residents of Brick Lane do not think it is correct. Finally it was confirmed that at this point no planning application has yet been received.

Three Pickerells' Planning Application

The application for the shipping container and marquee at the rear of the Three Pickerells has been deferred for four months while the applicant seeks to resolve the various grounds for objection including noise, parking and flood planning.

Auditors Recommendations

The Council's auditors Ernst & Young LLP have made a number of recommendations to the council. One of these, that the council 'should consider increasing the frequency that it considers and updates its MTFs [Medium Term Financial Strategy] and the underlying assumptions', arises from the auditors' work on value for money risks.

District council budget

The district council's ruling group is proposing to freeze its share of the council tax for a further year, assisted by the decision of the Trading Company to reduce its fee to the council for parks and gardens by £100,000. Natural environment (supplementary planning documents). At some point documents will come to Parish for comment

The next Councillors surgery is Tuesday 11 February, 6:30PM-7:30PM, Sutton, School Community Room.

County Councillor report – Lorna Dupré

On 31 January Lorna submitted her resignation as leader of my group on the County Council due to the return of the previous group leader Lucy Nethsingha who had been a member of the European Parliament for nearly nine months. Lucy will take up the reins once more.

County council budget

As reported in Lorna's January report, the county council budget papers recommended by the council's General Purposes Committee left a gap of some £4M. This will be proposed by the Leader of the Council as a dummy budget to the council's budget meeting on Tuesday 11 February. The proposal of the party in control is to increase general council tax by 1.59 per cent, in addition to the 2.00 per cent for adult social care.

Winter gritting costs

Lorna has been continuing to pursue the story behind the apparent £463,000 increase in the annual cost of winter gritting. Highways and finance staff have promised to work with the internal audit team to provide a detailed breakdown of the winter gritting budget prior to and following the change of contracts, setting out the specific details and answering clearly the reasons for the increases in costs and the current declared overspend. The Director responsible has asked for this review to be completed by 18 February along with a full briefing to Lorna. The council is currently reviewing the first two years' spending under the new contract with Skanska.

LHI bids

Lorna sits as a member of Local Highways Initiative Panel for East Cambridgeshire, reviewing around 20 applications for local schemes. There is general concern at a number of elements of the process this year, and a review is promised after this year's application round. One issue was the apparent conflict between assurances previously given to councillors that mobile vehicle-activated speed signs were purchased in bulk to gain economies of scale, and the very different costs and specifications for such signs in different parishes' bids. Lorna is waiting for clarification.

Police consultation

Cambridgeshire police have been consulting on a proposal to replace outdated facilities at Parkside Police Station in Cambridge with both a new city centre police station and a police hub on the outskirts of Cambridge near Milton. A drop-in at Ely Waitrose on Thursday 6 February 2:00-5:00PM is among the consultation sessions for members of the public to ask questions and make comments. There is an online survey which closes at 5:00PM on 29 February. <https://cambspoliceconsultation.co.uk/>

Electronic health care

Plans for digitising many aspects of our health services have been set out by the local NHS Sustainability & Transformation Partnership, a group tasked with overseeing coordination of the many NHS partners that provide our health care. These plans are aspirational and not set out in any practical detail, and yet the intention is for digital transformation to take place quickly. The goals are ambitious, reflecting the urgent shortfall of resources across the NHS. With the aim of reducing outpatients' face-to-face time by 30 per cent, patients may be asked to engage in consultations by video link or email. This will work for some but not others, given the lack of access to the necessary digital technology by a significant proportion of the population. Electronic healthcare. Some support was voiced but also concern about this being suitable for everyone, and a clear view that it must be optional. There was also additional concern about whether the NHS are able to handle the IT demands, particularly in relation to information security.

Schools Funding

The council's Children and Young People Committee has asked the Department for Education to allow the council to remove 1.8 per cent of the main schools budget and put it in the 'High Needs Block' to help meet the extra cost of providing for the increasing number and proportion of children needing extra help. This will mean, if approved, that the per pupil allocation in mainstream schools will go down by £50; this will have a significant and sometimes intolerable impact particularly on already perilous primary school budgets. That is not to say that children with special needs do not need the help – of course they do. But it does demonstrate that more cash from government is desperately needed to support our schools in the interests of all children.

Council expressed concern that there are more of these expensive healthcare plans, more geared to the more affluent areas. Maybe because there is more understanding of how to use the system. Perhaps it is more that these areas are getting what they need, but other areas are not. The General Purposes Committee has proposed using 'behavioural science techniques' with parents to try to reduce demand, something that Lorna is very uneasy about and voted against it.

Other points:

The archives held in Shire Hall have now been moved into the new building at Ely.

The Board of the Combined Authority met at the end of January, with a 780-page agenda which took four hours to finish. The Board has still not appointed a chair of its Climate Commission, which it voted to establish at the end of November. The Mayor had indicated that the Commission would publish an interim report 'in the spring', which now seems unlikely.

A scheme for '£100K homes' is to be implemented in every district in Cambridgeshire, with a number of homes available for purchase at £100,000. The Combined Authority would secure the home as affordable in perpetuity. When reselling the property the owner would need to notify the Combined Authority, and would be able to sell the property at half its market value.

Lancaster Way objection – Lorna has submitted an objection to the planning application by Grovemere (19/01704/FUL) for changes to the access road from the Lancaster Way roundabout into the business park, frequently by residents, whether by car, on foot, by bicycle, or on horseback. The application is on private land, and relates to the access road only, rather than to the wider reconfiguration of the roundabout. The latter is a highways matter, and would not be subject to a planning application. As the planning application appeared to assume and relate to a reconfigured roundabout, it was important to lodge concerns about the project as a whole.

142/19 OPEN FORUM FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were six members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

Maintenance issues related to a number of areas was raised with a request to see if remedial work could be carried out. There are issues with overgrown hedges at the entrance to Chestnut way and also hedges and trees at the junction with Witcham road. Some trimming of trees was suggested by Mepal PC need to establish whether they are highways or ours, if they are ours then we need to plan to sort this out. The Chairman agreed to speak to highways and if it is theirs will fill in the online request for maintenance. And work required by the Parish Council would be determined and proposed at the next Council meeting.

Once again, the subject of residents demands for CCTV were raised as a topic of high concern for the residents. A number of incidents of vans coming into the village and people trying doors or stealing items have been reported and seem to be on the increase. A comment from a member of the public was that there still seem to be 'boy racers' driving badly at the Witcham road/Sutton Road junctions and out onto the main road so there is an issue there that would be an added reason for CCTV.

Chairman Brian Rollason indicated that he continues to work on this project and that it was not simply a case of approving the purchase of equipment. Compliance and management of data protection (GDPR) and access to the system had to be carefully documented and he confirmed we were in discussion with other parishes (like Haddenham) in terms of what is required. Residents present at the meeting felt that coverage of both routes in and out of the village and also the Pavilion area were required. There is a definite demand from the villagers, and also justification they feel. It was suggested that a simpler solution from a legal standpoint, might be for neighbourhood watch to take control rather than a loose government body like the parish council. It was not clear whether this would be acceptable from a resource perspective.

Dog fouling is also a major issue and was once again raised by a member of the public. It was suggested that we need to report everything to the dog warden, but unless offenders see some action, it is hard to enforce the law. In some parts of the country, dog walkers need to carry multiple "waste disposal bags" or they risk a fine - even if the dog's not theirs. If we cannot find a solution to the increasing dog fouling, then this is something to look at. The gravel road was mentioned as a particular problem, but there is also a regular offender along the high street between the shop and the Laurel Close junction.

143/19 CO-OPTING OF NEW PARISH COUNCILLOR

By a majority vote it was resolved that Miss Rebecca Margieson is co-opted as a Councillor to Mepal Parish Council

144/19 PARISH POP UP EVENT

It has been announced that we will run a two-hour drop-in session from 14:30 – 16:30 on Sunday 1st March 2020. This is an opportunity to remind residents of some of the ideas they had proposed at the Community Led Plan survey and also to try to judge what the priorities should be. Posters to promote the event will be put up over the next 2 weeks by Councillor Lorna Williams and promotion through the various social media channels will continue. Councillor Lorna Williams has assumed responsibility for the planning in terms of the poster preparation, and all were asked to send content and photographs a week ahead of the event to allow printing time

Topics for the posters will include:

- Map of whole recreation field
- Reminder of CLP results/new questionnaire – Councillor Cassy Brown to provide feedback one week prior to event
- Gardening/Tree planting ideas
- Bat/bird box suggestion – pictures received from Georgina King
- Outdoor Gym / activity Trail ideas – posters received
- Playpark improvements – Parish Clerk has provided photographs
- Drainage of whole field and specifically the football pitch – Councillor Lorna Williams
- All-weather playing surface – Councillor Cassy Brown to provide some illustrations
- Other community clubs / activities
- Football Club poster frame
- Dog Park

Georgina King has indicated that her and a couple of ladies will look after the refreshments and Councillor Lorna Williams indicated that a list would be made of the refreshments needed (biscuits, some cakes, tea/coffee/juice/water). It was proposed that for a 2-hour session, it was not necessary to provide sandwiches. It is hoped that perhaps 30-50 people might drop in, but it is hard to estimate. The suggested £150-£200 from the last meeting should cover the costs, and Councillor Lorna Williams would provide a list to the Parish Clerk for purchase, but had suggested that if possible, we ought to purchase from the Mepal Stores to support the local shop. All other councillors are asked to support the event if possible.

145/19 PAVILION MAINTENANCE

Since May the PC has been reviewing the maintenance requirements in terms of legal compliance with a view to ensuring that all current maintenance tasks were bought up to date.

The following activities have now been completed:

- Heating
- Gas
- Water
- Electrics
- Cleaning

- Business rates adjustment

It was unanimously agreed that we would purchase the Sound Insulating Curtains. (ensure that they are also fire retardant as well as dry cleanable). It was unanimously agreed to purchase the shower heads as per quote received.

146/19 PAVILION WIFI

Cllr Brill gave an update on progress with possible set up stating that it was straightforward to install. It was suggested that it was installed in a secure metal cupboard up in loft, with two access points one at each end. This will also facilitate any CCTV and the cost is approximately £300. We should contract out the cable installation and, in this location, securing it is straightforward. We would have a system that would log all users. At this point a member of the public wondered if we had considered a 4G modem instead to avoid the need for a phone line. It was decided that it would be worth borrowing a modem to see whether this would be a lower cost solution before making a decision regarding broadband installation. Councillor Mark Brill indicated that he had access to the equipment and would run the trial as soon as possible.

147/19 NEW CONTAINER

It was unanimously agreed to purchase the refurbished container and locks as per the received quote and the Clerk should liaise with Martin from Mepal Sports Seniors for removal of all contents of the old container and delivery of new. This should not be before the drop-in on 1st March, but as soon as possible afterwards. The contents will be removed from the old container and temporarily stored in the Pavilion and then it should be arranged that the old container be returned before being replaced by the refurbished 20FT container (this is the largest we can get into the car park). It was unanimously approved that if an additional month's rental is incurred because we are unable to empty the container before 1st March then the PC will cover this cost.

148/19 PLANNING

20/00004/FUL Site South of Pond Farm, 3 High Street, Mepal

Construction of 1 no. 3 bedroom detached dwelling

After discussion it was unanimously agreed that the proposed additional dwelling on the site should be objected to on the grounds of overdevelopment (density of the housing on the site felt to be excessive, with the removal of proposed trees and screening from the original plan). It was also commented that the proposal has deviated considerably from the initial development application, and there were concerns that the former pond site with an additional house and loss of trees could be problematical in terms of surface water drainage if allowed to proceed,

19/01728/FUL Plot 4 Land North East of 15 Bridge Road, Mepal

Erection of dwelling and garage from extant outline planning permission 19/00909/OU

No Comment

149/19 ST MARYS CHURCH YARD GRANT

Following our correspondence to the Ely Diocese as a result of the legal advice from NALC that we would be breaking the law if we find any cemetery maintenance, the response was that it was a matter between the Parish Council and the Parochial Church Council at Mepal. In their view our suggestion of lobbying Government to get a change in the law to allow us to support the church cemetery maintenance on behalf of our parishioners would be pretty fruitless given their Brexit-related legislative agenda. It was also pointed out that the NALC's solicitor's advice is in fact in conflict with the Governments well and publicly known view (or, at least that of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport).

In fact, the quoted paragraph in the email received from the Head of Church Buildings and Pastoral, Diocese of Ely on 16th January 2020 does **not** appear to disagree with the legal advice we have been given and specifically states that section 8 of the 1894 act should be repealed to clarify that local authorities can invest in church buildings in accordance with Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. Rather unhelpfully we have been asked "how many parish councils have been legally challenged for spending money on churchyard maintenance since the act came into for 126 years ago?" and that the answer to this is the extent of the risk that we are taking if we continue to cover the maintenance of church cemetery's!

Councillor Lorna Williams has recently suggested text for two additional letters - one to the Ely Diocese making a couple of additional points in response to their comments and one to the Mepal PCC explaining our difficulty. Councillor Cassy Brown was of the opinion that there seemed little point replying to the Ely Diocese letter, as

they have stated their position, but Councillor Lorna Williams felt it was warranted to close the discussion off, as she did not agree with all of their points. It would be left to the Parish Clerk to decide whether to send both.

150/19 VE DAY UPDATE

Greg Matthews gave an update on the event and answered questions. The event is now fully funded, with three events being held in the run up. A 40-page event management plan has been produced and will be run through next week with the Cambridge Safety Advisory Group (SAG) and any issues will subsequently be dealt with.

One area where they would still like assistance is in the organisation of vintage vehicles? Greg said that if anyone had any leads, they could send him, then they would be gratefully received. Chairman Brian Rollason also suggested seeing whether any old plans or information was available from the RAF Witchford collection.

Parking is the biggest challenge, and a request was made to use grass at the two sides of the field in front of the Pavilion. This was agreed. A request that a line of cones is placed on the road outside the entrance on either side to stop parking. The ration books will be out soon with circulation started at the village breakfast. Live music is lined up. A member of the public asked whether what was actually happening on the day could be shared,

The intention is to have 20 stalls of traders with 6-7 of their own stalls. Mepal Camera club are involved and there will be a Beer Tent, Bean bag toss, AV equipment to run war films and audio effects where a dial can be turned to listed to archive footage. There will be a wartime sweets stall, and the youth club are building models. Bunting is to be made by the school and the live singers are booked.

They are hoping for 500 people, but it was suggested that 300 might be more realistic. The idea with the ration book is to anticipate numbers. It might be worth targeting senior schools, but the advertising is being kept Mepal-centric. Sainsbury are donating the food, all pre-packed so no food hygiene issues. Once it is gone, then it's gone. The organising committee are talking to the Legion in Sutton to try to pool the request for military vehicles. There is also a proposal for a dog show? One of the vets from Johnson & Scotts vets in Witchford who lives in Mepal used to judge previous dog shows on the Recreation Field, so her contact details would be passed on.

A member of the public asked how many people over the age of 65 live in the village and whether the organisers could contact local groups (good companions/friendship club or the Union Chapel) to offer to talk to them about possible arrangements. Greg said he would look into this.

Better communication is part of the 40-page plan. Once the plan is approved, they will lodge with the PC. There is a core committee of 4, and about a dozen more people will be needed on the day on the day.

151/19 EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR PROJECTS FOR INCLUSION ON THE COUNCILS "CIL" INFRASTRUCTURE LIST

It was unanimously confirmed that Mepal Parish Council does not currently have any Expressions of Interest for projects for inclusion on the Council's CIL Infrastructure List in 2020.

152/19 GARDENING CLUB

Following the demise of the Gardening Club, it was unanimously agreed that Mepal PC will take back maintenance of the garden surrounding the Mepal sign opposite the village hall and to agree to support former members of the club bulb planting on ground as you enter the village.

153/19 FINANCE

a) DIRECT DEBITS PAID:

E-ON Street Lighting 01/12/2019-31/12/2019 £35.01 DD
Plusnet Mobile £7.00 DD
SSE - Electric for Pavilion 1.10.2019-31.12.2019 £124.93 DD
Opus Energy Gas Pavilion 19.01.2019-18.01.2020 £86.81 DD
Opus - Gas Pavilion 18.11-18.12.2019 £103.96 DD

b) Payments Made:

Honey Housekeeping -December 2019 £50.00 BACS
Fenman Vermin £75.00 CHEQ
CPD Electrical - Pavilion Fire Alarm Service/emergency Lighting £169.00 BACS
Mepal Village Hall - Hire £60.00 CHEQ
David J Richards - Mepal People Printing £96.96 BACS

Amazon - No drinking water signs for Pavilion £2.79 OC
Mepal Youth Club £250.00 BACS
Poppy Appeal £60.00 CHEQ
Staff wages, PAYE and Expenses £1925.86 BACS
HMRC £333.24 BACS
CPD Electrical - repairs required to Fire Alarm, Emergency Lighting and
Loft lights £1476.54 BACS
CPD Electrical - Full Electrical Installation Report and Certificate £270.00 BACS
Screwfix - Cylinder Lock - Pavilion £29.99 OC
Timpsons - 8 x security keys for new locks £102.50 OC

c) CREDITS

SSE FIT Meter Payment 14/06/19 to 09/01/2020 £729.58 CHEQ

154/19 DIARY DATES - The next Full Parish Council meeting will be Tuesday 10th March 2020 at 7.30pm at Mepal Community Pavilion

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Karen Peck
Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Mepal Parish Council

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Brian Rollason
Chairman
Mepal Parish Council

Date.....