



Mepal Parish Council ANNUAL REPORT 2021/21

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CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Last year was a difficult year for us all, and I would like to thank the Parish Council staff and all the current councillors for their work to allow the Parish Council to continue to function despite the challenges.

We started off the year determined to swiftly implement the agreed work to reinstate our football pitches and fix the sinking drainage lines, but the work was delayed due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the resulting lockdowns. Despite this, a herculean effort allowed us to get the work completed in the last few weeks. We are going to have to stay on top of this, which means costly annual maintenance involving compaction, filling and reseeded will be required. The advice is that, if we can commit to this for the next three years to re-establish the grass carpet then we may be able to reduce the high initial maintenance levels in subsequent years. We will have to look at how the community and the FA can assist in the maintenance in the future to cover the costs of third-party contractors.

We plan to look at the options for the Pavilion in 2021 to see what we can do to improve the usage and welcome new renters when it is safe to do so. We are keeping an eye on the guidance within our limited resources, as we must understand how things can be safely opened again in 2021. We still have some further maintenance issues to put right before the Pavilion can be fully opened for everyone, and we need to understand the impact of any continuing capacity restrictions on the practicality of allowing full use of the facility.

Further to my indication in last year's report that we wanted to improve the areas around the recreation field, we have removed the spoils heap in the corner of the field and installed an attenuation pond which has recently been fenced off. We managed to obtain a grant from Mick George to install some Hoggin paths and to enlarge and improve the car park. With new gates and bollards, I hope you will all agree that the area is starting to look more cared for.

We found it difficult to manage the safety issues and removal of damaged equipment in the Play Area last year but having finally managed to remove the lumps of concrete and other hazards to make the areas good in the autumn of 2020 and with some community volunteers

to carry out daily inspections, we managed to open the park in November. We understand the frustration that having the park closed caused but did the best we could with limited resources during the lockdowns. We still have plans to install some new equipment suitable for a slightly older age group and if agreed at subsequent meetings will try to get this arranged before summer 2021. We have had to temporarily remove the zip wire from use due to a damaged spring brake (wear and tear) whilst we wait for the replacement part to come from Germany, but we hope to get this working as soon as possible.

We are still unfortunately seeing outbreaks of vandalism in the parish, with the newly refurbished bus stop having the new panels kicked in and the notice board destroyed for a second time. We also see what looks like attempts to pull up the safety matting next to the climbing frame in the play park and offensive graffiti on play park seating and would urge everyone to be vigilant. This is very disappointing.

One area that we will need to work on is the Brangehill Drove / Lilibet woods area between Meadow Way and the A142. Our Clerk was able to get Cambridge County Council to clear the byway/footpath, but the contractor was appalled at the level of fly tipping into the brambles and ditch he observed. Consequently, this is now a much harder issue to manage and environmentally, because of the standing water, we will have to resolve this. Clearing the ditch with the rubbish and standing water will need a specialist contractor, which we are currently looking at.

We are also mindful of the fact that the issue of the clearance of brambles is contentious but, when allowed to run completely out of control with no management, this allows rubbish to accumulate which is unsightly and hazardous. The litter cannot be safely collected and disposed of unless the brambles are removed. We will be looking at a balance of wildlife protection and management of the ditch to sensibly reconcile both aspects in this area. We would ask that people do not ever dispose of rubbish over their fencing onto these areas, and to please take all litter home if there is no suitable nearby bin. We know that the issue of litter is one that residents are concerned about and are talking about setting up community litter picking groups and we can support such activities, providing they are carried out safely.

The Parish Council along with, the Community Working Group and the County and District Councillors have worked extremely hard representing the communities view on the proposed Brick Lane Development. A very good presentation was made on behalf of the village by the Parish Councils Vice Chair, two members of the community and both the District and County Councillors making a clear statement that the plans for Brick Lane need to be rethought and were not supported by the Community. We are very pleased to say that the efforts of all involved paid off and the application was Refused. The Parish Council would like to thank everyone who sent letters of objections and worked with us in this mammoth effort. We are still wanting to maintain the high level of engagement with the community regarding their thoughts about any future plans for this piece of land, and also have to be mindful of the possibility of a re-submitted application from the developers.

We now have three vacancies on the Parish Council and would particularly welcome anyone with planning knowledge or experience. If any members of the public would more information, please contact our Parish Clerk.

Brian Rollason, Chairman 2020/21

WHO & WHAT IS THE PARISH COUNCIL?

Mepal Parish Council comprises of 7 voluntary Councillors representing an electorate of 796. Once elected, parish councillors sit on the council for a maximum of four years and if they then want to stay in the post they can stand for re-election.

Due to the meeting restrictions because of the Coronavirus pandemic, Parish Council Meetings in 2020 were held via Zoom with everyone welcome to join remotely. Meetings will resume at the Mepal Community Pavilion once it is safe to do so and everyone is welcome to join, assuming we can meet safely in person, or that the regulation allows us to continue to meet via Zoom. Agendas and information about Parish Council meetings are displayed on the Parish Council Website. <http://www.mepalparish.org>

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings and may speak during Public Forum on matters that are on that meeting's agenda. The Parish Council is not permitted to decide on matters that have not been duly advertised to the public unless any matters are considered urgent or are authorised in the Parish Council's standing orders.

The Parish Council's major role is to represent the parish on issues affecting us to the District and County Councils, and to regional and central government, and other agencies. It is responsible for the Community Pavilion, some parish grass cutting, its own street furniture (noticeboards, litter bins, dog waste bins, seats, bus stops and some street lighting) and through the Parish Paths Partnership, ensures that registered Rights of Way are open and maintained. It maintains open spaces: The Recreation Field and attached children's play area, the Village Green, the Laurel Close Green, Brangehill Drove and Lilibet Woods. The Parish Council considers and comments to the Local Planning Authority on all planning applications (statutory consultee). The Parish Council supports other charitable groups and organisations which work within the village.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2020/21

Year Ended 31/03/2020		Year Ended 31/03/2021
	INCOME	
£32,425.00	Precept	£32,425.00
£10,797.78	Community Infrastructure Levy	£9,311.48
-	ECDC Grants ³	£19,874.00
£5,886.87	Other Income ⁶	£2,587.07
£3,969.52	VAT reclaimed ¹	£12,407.21
£53,079.17	Total Income	£76,604.76
	EXPENDITURE	
£25,414.56	Administration & Staffing ²	£33,833.50
£3,971.88	S137 Payments (inc. Grants)	£2,994.99
£897.84	Loan Interest & Repayment	£897.84
£17,819.87	Parish Maintenance inc Pavilion	£14,133.81
-	Vandalism	£454.39
£13,433.50	Projects (playpark & field) ^{4,7}	£49,072.51
-	VAT paid	£10,504.05
£61,537.65	Total Expenditure	£111,891.18
£100,946.52	Balance 1 April 2020 >	£92,488.04
£53,079.17	Add Total Income	£76,604.76
£154,025.69		£169,092.80
£61,537.65	Less Total Expenditure	£111,891.18
£92,488.04	Balance 31st March 2021 >	£57,201.62

Notes to the financial report

1. We have been advised that expenditure should be recorded as net of any VAT refund. Therefore the 2020/21 expenditure is net of VAT and the VAT reclaimed to date is separately itemised. The expenditure figures for the previous year ended 31st March 2020 included the VAT paid where applicable and so the amount of VAT is not separately itemised. An amount of the VAT reclaimed was in relation to expenditure in the last quarter of the previous financial year.
2. A new maintenance manager was appointed in September to manage the repairs and maintenance to reduce the use of third-party contractors where applicable.

3. Just before the end of the 2020/21 financial year we were able to apply for and were awarded several ECDC Covid grants. These were unbudgeted and unexpected when the year-end position was predicted in January 2021
4. We had to defer a substantial grant and the expenditure related to it for a project on the car park and recreation field from Mick George into the 2021/22 financial year. The work was completed before 31st March 2021, but the invoices were not paid, and the grant not received until after the year end.
5. The difference between the actual and predicted year-end balance that was used to set the 2021/22 budget back in December 2020 will lead to the need for a revised 2021/22 budget at some point.
6. Due to FIT meter reading issues during lockdown, no FIT payment was received in 2020, this will now be received in the 2021/22 financial year.
7. The major project in the 2020/21 financial year was the work to finally resolve the drainage lines with the installation of an attenuation pond to assist rapid drainage and a proper maintenance regime being re-instated including adequate vertidrainage and filling and compaction of the existing lines to prevent the voiding that occurs when this maintenance is not carried out every year.
8. The 2021/22 budget proposal approved in January 2021 after the precept was set in December 2020 and subsequently claimed from ECDC, is available on the website. The 2021/22 budget is being reviewed in the light of additional grant funding received late in March 2021 and may be adjusted at the May Annual Parish Meeting. Any new proposals agreed will be minuted on the meeting minutes.

Lorna Williams, Finance Working Group.

2020 ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY GRANTS

Under our Section 137 powers (Power of local authorities to incur expenditure for certain purposes not otherwise authorised), Mepal Parish council can use a small proportion of the precept each year to award a grant to village organisations. These must be charities or not-for-profit organisations and the grant must directly benefit Mepal residents.

The Parish Council has a grant-making policy and application form which can be accessed on our website and all grant applications should be received before the last Friday in October each year, for consideration at a full council meeting in November. Payment of successful grant application is made in the following financial year (April).

2020 was a difficult time for many local groups and clubs in the village, who were unable to meet face to face for much of the year. Nevertheless, the Parish council was able to award grants to the Youth Club, the Village Hall, Mepal Sports Seniors

ARMISTICE DAY & REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY



Parish Council Chairman Brian Rollason laid two wreaths on behalf of the village for this year's scaled down Remembrance Sunday service. We also helped the Church with the risk assessment for what had to be a restricted event due to the Covid pandemic.

MICK GEORGE COMMUNITY FUND

In 2020 Mepal Parish Council decided to apply for a grant to fund improvements to the Recreation field including new fencing around the attenuation pond, work on the car park, and paths and additional work on the field drainage lines during Spring 2021. An application was made to the Mick George Community Grant and in February 2021 we were notified that the grant application was successful, and we received the funding contract.

With some effort by the Clerk, Maintenance Manager and Councillors we managed to complete the work by the 31st March deadline and we hope you will all agree that the Recreation field is currently looking very smart and we are extremely grateful to Mick George for the provision of funds that allowed us to make these changes.



BRANGEHILL DROVE AND LILLIBET WOODS

We have been investigating what maintenance was needed on the land deeded to the Parish Council by the developers of the Meadow Way estate. The Brangehill Drove footpath & byway runs from the end of Brick Lane to the Brangehill Lane cul-de-sac and then there is another parcel of land between the Drove and the A142, that the Parish Council previously formed with tree planting as Lilibet Woods.

We are very grateful to Roland Fletcher for cutting and clearing the byway on behalf of Cambridge County Council (rights of way) leaving character where he could and creating some habitat) along this pleasant byway.



Unfortunately, at several points the ditch on the east side Roland noted that the area had been used as a dumping ground for domestic rubbish from bottles to children's toys and furniture.

Because of the health and safety and hazardous waste implications, clearance is unfortunately going to cost money in 2021 that we would prefer to be spending differently.



Just to show the effect of opening up the area and removing some of the overgrowth of vegetation we have a before and after shot:

BEFORE:



AFTER:



YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS 2020/21



Brian Rollason
(Chairman)



Lorna Williams
(Vice Chairman)



Jack Hickman



Samantha Foord

As of May 2021, we have three Parish Councillor vacancies. Please contact the Parish Clerk for more information.

To contact the Parish Council

Clerk: Mrs Karen Peck. Mepal Parish Council

Tel: 01353 741066

Email: clerk@mepalparish.org

District and County Councillor contacts

District Councillors:

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28 The America, Sutton, Cambs, CB6 2NY. Tel: 07764 566319

Lorna Dupre: lorna@lornadupre.org.uk

Inglefield, 119 High Street, Sutton CB6 2NW. Tel: 07930 337596

County Councillor:

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Copies of this report are available online <http://www.mepalparish.org>

Any enquires regarding this publication please contact the Parish Clerk (details above)