



Mepal Parish Council ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The 2020/21 financial year has been a hard year for the councillors and staff of Mepal, partly due to the low numbers of councillors but mostly due to the amount of work that has been undertaken.

The Council have shared the increased workload, but I would particularly like to thank the vice chairman and staff for their hard work and dedication to the Parish.

Throughout the last 12 months we have seen improvements in many areas including the pavilion, the recreation field, and other amenities, and assets in the village. None of these improvements are overnight fixes as it takes time to work out the most effective solutions and put approved plans in place to correct things, but every small move is a step forward. As a Parish Council we must follow due process and we all appreciate how frustrating it may seem to those outside of the Council that we can't do things quicker, but rest assured that we are acting as quickly as budgets, rules and long terms maintenance demands allow.

The councillors are very diligent on how the monies are spent and are always making sure that the most is gained from any expenditure. Due to all their hard work the council tax precept increase requested for this year was nowhere near that of any of the neighbouring towns or villages.

Mepal is a very complex village due to its large assets and their locations, all of which have to be run and managed by the Parish Council. This has meant that long term plans must be developed to manage and maintain them, whilst minimising the resources needed. Additional work to resolve some long-standing deficiencies to bring the standards in line with the current regulations has also been necessary.

Brian Rollason, Chairman 2021/22

WHO & WHAT IS THE PARISH COUNCIL?

Mepal Parish Council has 7 unpaid Councillors representing an electorate of 832. 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. Currently only 4 of the 7 vacancies are filled and we are urgently looking for three new Councillors to join us.

The legislation allowing Parish Councils to meet remotely was not renewed in May 2021, so official Parish Council Meetings in 2021 from May could no longer be held via Zoom. We took the decision to hold virtual meetings including the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council before the legislation expired on 6th May 2021 and to instate a delegation scheme that allowed the Clerk to conduct official business until we felt it was safe to hold public meetings. Official meetings resumed on the Recreation Field outside the Mepal Community Pavilion on 10th August 2021, due to rising Covid cases in the parish. 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 2021/22

Actual Year Ended 31/03/2022		Budget ⁸ Year Ended 31/03/2023
	INCOME	
£37,300	Precept	£38,792
£15,026	Community Infrastructure Levy ¹	£6,750
£35,725	ECDC Covid & other Grants ²	£0
£4,985	Other Income ³	£4,005
£7,849	VAT Refunds ⁴	£5,000
£100,885	Total Income	£54,547
	EXPENDITURE	
£5,021	Office Administration ⁵	£5,235
£29,776	Staff and employment costs ⁶	£32,740
£375	S137 Payments (inc. Grants)	£3,537
£898	Loan Interest & Repayment	£898
£9,337	Parish Maintenance inc Pavilion	£8,363
£54,817	Projects (playpark & field) ⁷	£17,125
11,098	VAT component	£3,425
£111,322	Total Expenditure	£71,222
£57,202	Balance b/f	£46,765
£100,885	Add Total Income	£54,547
£158,087		£103,312
£111,322	Less Total Expenditure	£71,222
£46,765	Balance c/f	£30,090

Notes to the financial report

1. An additional £5,715 CIL receipts were received over the level predicted by ECDC last year.
2. The grant from Mick George for the recreation field and car park improvement work was paid in the 2021/22 financial year.
3. Due to FIT meter reading issues during lockdown, no FIT payment was received in 2020, double payment was received in the 2021/22 financial year.
4. We have been advised to record expenditure as net of any VAT refund owed for the approved budgets. The VAT reclaim and the VAT component of the expenditure is therefore recorded separately. An amount of the VAT reclaimed this financial year was in relation to expenditure in the last half of the previous financial year. VAT refunds for Q3 & Q4 of this financial year will be claimed in the following financial year.

5. Office Administration covers the basic costs of running the Parish Council office, including annual costs of office equipment, software and consumables, subscriptions, newsletter and other printing costs, telephone, training and annual website costs for the domain and email accounts.
6. Mepal Parish Council now has two part-time staff and self-manages repairs and maintenance to reduce and control the costs of third-party contractors where possible. Salaries and the levels of annual increases are agreed nationally retrospectively so must be estimated. We do not have a separate caretaker for the Pavilion, so staffing also includes considerable management of this asset. The 4 parish councillors also all work full-time and are unable to support the Clerk during the working week. Staffing estimates for 2022/23 includes contractually agreed CiLCA training for the Clerk.
7. 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.
8. The 2022/23 budget proposal was initially approved in December 2021 to be able to set the Precept from ECDC. It is available on the website under the Parish Council Finance tab. The 2022/23 budget was reviewed after the year end and adjusted to take account of the final audited figures. The final budget will be agreed, adopted and minuted via a resolution taken at the May Annual Parish Meeting.

Lorna Williams, Finance Working Group.

2021 ACTIVITIES

RECREATION FIELD AND PAVILION CAR PARK

The work to improve the access to the recreation field was completed and safety fencing added to the attenuation pond at the back of the field. We continue to work on the quality of the grass and carefully monitor compaction and aeration. This additional work will be required for a further 2 years to make sure that the grass growth is knitted in fully.

We have more work to do on the path up to the entrance to the Pavilion to improve disabled access and will be looking for any available grant funding to achieve this, in addition we will be looking at the current double or triple doors at the back of the Pavilion to ensure that they meet the required access regulations. Work to resolve the non-compliant electrics in the Kitchen have been carried out and the non-working extractor fans for the showers have been replaced and put on timers. The non-working hand driers are now all replaced, and the internal redecoration work was started just before year end and will be completed for 1st June 2022.



LAUREL CLOSE PLAY PARK

We carried out work to repair the zip wire and to refresh the safety bark. We had planned to install some new equipment, but this project is postponed until we have new Councillors to help with the project.



BRANGHE DROVE

The Parish engaged a contractor to carry out

maintenance on the Drove and clear the rubbish. There was complete overgrowth of the drainage ditch and clear fly tipping amongst the bushes and brambles resulting in the need to cut these areas right back. The



intention is to put in place an annual maintenance programme to stay on top of the area and there is still work to be done.

MEPAL VILLAGE SIGN

The sign located on the verge opposite the Village Hall was suffering from wear and tear and was showing its age, so the Parish Council Maintenance manager decided to use lockdown in early 2021 to carefully refurbish the sign. Complete with new emblems from 75 New Zealand Squadron the sign was re-installed and is back to taking pride of place in the centre of the village.



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Following requests to have a Mepal Neighbourhood Plan, and a poor response to the article in the October 2021 Mepal Matters newsletter for new Councillors, we have decided to apply for grant funding and have engaged a specialist consulting company to help us put the plan together. This will require engagement from the community to successfully bring the project to its conclusion and publish a plan.

PARISH TREE SURVEY

Did you know that we have more than 92 trees and another 8 large groups of trees along Brangehill drove and Lilibet woods? In December we decided to undertake an Arboriculture Condition and Hazard Assessment of the trees located within the Parish owned land and have carried out urgent work to remove dead/dangerous trees. We have more work to try to plan over the next 12 months and now have a baseline survey to work with.

YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS 2020/21



Brian Rollason
(Chairman)



Lorna Williams
(Vice Chairman)



Jack Hickman



Samantha Foord

As of April 2022, 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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Lorna Dupre: lorna@lornadupre.org.uk

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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)