

# MEPAL PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Karen Peck, email: [clerk@mepalparish.org](mailto:clerk@mepalparish.org) tel 01353 741066

Chairman: Mr Brian Rollason, email: [brian@mepalparish.org](mailto:brian@mepalparish.org)

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**NOTICE OF MEETING:** Mepal Parish Council  
**TIME:** 18.00 to 19.00 (the meeting will close at 19.00 prompt)  
**DATE:** Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022  
**VENUE:** Mepal Community Pavilion

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 6  
VACANCIES 1  
QUORUM 3

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## MINUTES

**Attendees:** Cllr Williams (LBW), Cllr Stewart (JS), Cllr Delanoy (LD), Cllr Knighton (SK) and one member of the public

- 131222/1 TO RECORD APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
Councillor Rollason and Councillor Hickman sent apologies – work commitments. Apologies accepted County Councillor Lorna Dupre – work commitments. In the absence of the Chairman according to Clause 3p of the Standing Orders, the Vice Chairman, Cllr Williams Chaired the meeting.
- 131222/2 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
There were no declarations of interest given
- 131222/3 TO SIGN AND APPROVE MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF:**  
With a small amendment replacing the word 'Agenda' with the word 'Minutes', the Full Parish Council Meeting minutes of 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022 were proposed by SK, and seconded by LD as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Motion carried. LW to update website.
- 131222/4 TO RECEIVE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORTS**  
Reports had been received from both the District and County Councillor and were available in full on the parish council website
- 131222/5 OPEN FORUM FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (15 minutes)**  
At the close of this item, members of the public will no longer be permitted to address the Council unless invited to do so by the Chairman  
There were no issues raised
- 131222/6 COUNCIL BUSINESS**
- a) Laurel Close damage to greens and verges  
The Parish Council discussed the correspondence received regarding damage to verges and green spaces at Laurel Close. The Council discussed various option to help resolve the issue and it was agreed by unanimous decision to erect bollard/fencing to the full area to prevent further damage.
  - b) Neighbourhood plan update  
Councillors had discussed the draft plan produced by the Consultant working with us. The consultant explained the process that we have to go through and the necessary supporting

documents that need to be produced. We are required to produce a designated area plan, and this is slightly more complicated by the fact that the existing plan developed by ECDC is out of date. It is important to reflect the permitted applications that have superseded the out-of-date plan. The other supporting documents relate to local green spaces, and the settlement boundary methodology. The neighbourhood plan includes two themed sections: Sustainable Development and Natural and Built Environment. The timescales are that once the Parish Council and consultant have prepared the documents, the Parish Council will formally pass a resolution in the February 2023 PC meeting, to allow the draft plan to go out for the 6-week pre-submission consultation under Regulation 14. This will link to the March/April Mepal Matters so that publicity regarding access to the plan can go out to all households and any modification to the plan can be made before it is submitted to ECDC for their publication.

c) Warm Hub - the Parish Council are delighted to be working in Partnership with Mepal Village Hall Committee to offer a dedicated Warm Space to the community of Mepal this winter. Parish Councillors form part of the dedicated volunteer structure within the hub

d) To discuss and approve Budget and Precept for 2023-24

LBW had presented a full spreadsheet to all councillors to be able to look at the predicted costs for the 2023/24 financial year with a view to setting the precept before the meeting.

We have not yet felt the effects of the significant increases in electricity and gas costs as the weather has remained mild. We are not likely to be able to assess the full effects until well into January, and this will not be in time for the budgeting for the precept. We will have to use our estimates and rely on reserves if further increases are seen in 2023.

Although we have no sports hire revenue, this is offset by the corresponding reduction in heating and lighting costs and a reduced requirement for grass maintenance, so in fact is a net budget gain. The provisions for hire of the pavilion are however significantly less than previous years so it is vital that we identify additional bookings to be able to cover some of the fixed overheads. Hire during the warmer months is more beneficial as the heating costs reduce.

Of particular significance to the 2023/24 budget is the grass cutting and maintenance costs. The PC already manages the verge and greens grass cutting however to date we have used a third-party contractor for the recreation field. Due to an increase in per cut costs of £80 - £120 (depending on contractors) it has become unsustainable to use a third-party contractor. This is largely due to rising fuel costs issues and general inflation. Reducing the area cut did not significantly decrease the quotes, as a large proportion of the costs are getting to the location. We have therefore had to bring all grass cutting in house and Parish Council staffing costs and fuel for the lawnmower and additional servicing provision have been added to the provisional budget to mitigate for some of the increases (it is approximately 50% less to cut ourselves, however this is still a significant increase in 2022/23 costs).

The NALC pay award agreed nationwide in late October/early November has also been actioned and implemented by the Council.

There was an in-depth discussion about the need to have a balanced budget and an acknowledgement that we cannot spend more than we receive; relying on the reserves to subsidise the budget is now at a point where it is no longer sustainable. From this point the income and expenditure must balance, which will necessitate an increase in the precept this year. Pavilion hire income is predicted to fall in 2023/24, and we acknowledge that the Mepal community prefer to hire the village hall. There is no predicted CIL money from ECDC for projects in 2023/24, which will result in a £8000 drop in income in comparison to the current financial year. The Parish maintenance budget and staffing costs will need to increase by £4000 to deal with the grass cutting on the field and the national pay award. Finally, this year's budget had a -£14,865 balance of income/expenditure as it allocated the annual maintenance work for Brangehill Drove and the maintenance work required from the Parish Tree survey to the earmarked reserves, which are now used. Future project work will require the reserves to be built back up, in the absence of CIL money.

A number of scenarios were looked at in terms of predicted pavilion utilities, parish lighting costs, cost of fuel for the Parish grass cutting, the level of grants applied for under S137 and basic field maintenance costs. Any additional maintenance/ repair costs to areas used as sports pitches would need to be met by any sports club regularly using the pitch and changing rooms, as the current £65 per match for 4 hours use does not cover the costs and so is already subsidised. Also reviewed were possible election costs, increases to website costs and other software costs and training budgets.

It was proposed that the general reserves should be changed to be 40% of budgeted payments, with an additional earmarked reserve of about £9000 to be allocated.

The Council discussed the S137 applications from Village Group for the 2023-24 period and it was agreed to allocate £1135 for S137 grants (2.2% of the precept).

As a result, it was agreed to award the following:

Mepal Friendship Group           £250

Mepal Youth Club                   £885

This resulted in a proposal to set the 2023/24 payment budget at £57,091 including VAT, the receipt budget at £57,410 including any budgeted VAT reclaim with a precept of £52,370. This calculates as an annual increase of £33.03 for a Band D property, or 64p/week average household increase.

Motion proposed by LBW, seconded by SK and carried unanimously.

- e) Vandalism and Antisocial behaviour to Parish Council Assets and village assets  
The Council noted the latest spate of vandalism that had taken place in the community; Mepal Pantry damaged again, damage to the play area making it unsafe for users and vandalism to the Parish Council noticeboard which has now resulted in this being unusable.  
The Parish Council agreed to replace the Perspex in the board once only and hoped there would be no repeat damage.  
They also felt the need to reach out to Mepal Pantry to offer their thanks for the continued support to the local community, in spite of the continued vandalism.
- f) To ask that members of the community use the correct communication routes to report concerns, anti-social behaviour, and other issues. Without reports being made to the correct agencies the community will continue to be targeted, please help us help the community.
- g) To note the Tree Works to Council owned stock is now completed. The tree with brambles opposite Laurel Close Park had been surveyed whilst the extensive tree works took place and it was deemed as non-urgent issue
- h) Mepal Matters Continuation update  
The Parish Council discussed the responses and concluded the overall feeling was that the publication was needed within the community. LBW proposed, SK seconded to continue with the bi-monthly publication. Motion carried

131222/7

#### **PLANNING (10 minutes)**

##### **TO DISCUSS:**

##### **22/01418/FUL 16a Bridge Road, Mepal**

Proposed first floor extension, porch, and partial over-cladding of existing brick wall at first floor level  
The Parish Council discussed the application and had objection

##### **RESPONSES SENT AND PENDING CONSIDERATION:**

##### **21/01208/FUL Land at Mepal Engine Bank - Change of use of reservoir, woodland and open space to private recreational use, and construction of outbuildings - Retrospective**

And the Appeal is:

##### **22/00020/CONAPP Change of use of reservoir, woodland and open space to private recreational use, and construction of outbuildings - Retrospective Land at Mepal Engine Bank Mepal Cambridgeshire**

The Parish Council feel the conditions applied, are justified as described in the permission granted. The applicant's objections relate to the impact these conditions might have on their convenience.

The objection to condition 2 describes a desire to use the facility for charities and local groups to have access to the facility for intermittent use. This was not, as far as they can see, described in the application and was not considered by the LPA. This form of use, however, has not been discounted by the LPA should the applicant apply for non-personal use and such permission be granted. The fact that the applicant considers this requirement 'overly bureaucratic, time consuming and expensive' i.e. 'inconvenient' is not a reason to remove the condition.

The applicant goes on to state that 'light, intermittent traffic does not constitute a loss of amenity'. 'Light intermittent traffic' might describe the level of traffic anticipated if the site is used for the purposes described in the original application i.e., for personal use by friends and family. It may not describe the level of traffic to be expected if the site is opened for use by groups of scouts, charities and other local groups - who would also presumably all be using the site at no cost to themselves as commercial use is precluded.

The objection to condition 5 also appears to be lacking in merit. Presumably the level of lighting described in the original application reflects that required for use of the site in the manner described in the application. Should further lighting subsequently be required then a further application can be made to the LPA. Why would the LPA effectively remove any restriction on the applicant installing

additional lighting in such an environmentally sensitive area?

If the applicant has no desire to shoot animals or birds on their land having plenty of opportunity to do this elsewhere why are they objection to condition 8? The fact that shooting takes place on surrounding land is not relevant – reducing the area of land on which shooting takes place self-evidently reduces the quantity of wildlife being killed in this manner thereby enhancing and protecting species. Just because shooting wildlife takes place somewhere does not make it a good idea everywhere.

Should the prevalence of any particular species become an issue and should the relevant authority consider it appropriate to control numbers by shooting then an application can be made to allow shooting of wildlife to take place. It does not seem reasonable to remove this condition based on some hypothetical future scenario which may or may not come to pass.

The Parish Council therefore are objecting to the requested removal of the planning conditions that were imposed to protect residential amenity, and the also wildlife given the proximity of the site to the Ouse Washes (SSSI and Ramsar protected).

**22/00561/FUL Broadmead Boarding Kennels, Witcham Road, Mepal**

Construction of three bed dwelling

The Parish council had no objection to the application amendment – Pending Consideration

**22/01213/FUL 7a High Street, Mepal**

Extension and alterations to existing store a 7a High Street, creation of 2-bedroom flat above 7a including access and alteration to the access of 7 High Street – the Parish Council have no objection – Pending Consideration

**UPDATES:**

**22/01219/LBC Pond Farm, 3 High Street, Mepal**

Erection of domestic outbuilding and curtilage alterations (part retrospective) - Withdrawn

**22/00833/FUL Horticultural site between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal**

Construction of dwelling (plot 2) previously approved under reference 19/00799/OUT

**22/00834/FUL Horticultural site between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal**

Construction of dwelling (Plot 1) previously approved under reference 19/00799/OUT and 20/0157/RMA (partially retrospective) -Approved

**21/01216/F3M Mepal Outdoor Centre**

Construction of a crematorium and associated services – Approved

131222/8

**CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED (information purposes only, not for discussion)**

Mepal Sports – copy of minutes of meeting 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Resident – Bus Stop Notice Board

Resident – Laurel Close Parking

Ouse Washes Bank Raising Works - December Newsletter 2022

Craft Group – donation of Christmas Nature Tree

Resident requesting support in regard to 22/00020/CONAPP Change of use of reservoir, woodland and open space to private recreational use, and construction of outbuildings - Retrospective Land at Mepal Engine Bank Mepal

Resident - telecommunication cover Witcham Road left open – to note this is not Parish Council property and should be immediately reported to BT Openreach for safety reasons. BT attended within 7 hours of an official report but unfortunately had a wasted journey as this had already been replaced

131222/8

**FINANCE**

1. To approve payments and Bank Reconciliation up to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022

**a) Online Payments:**

Goren Farm – yellow rattle seed	£260.00
HMRC, Wages and Expenses	£2932.25
DEA Cambridge Ltd – Energy Survey	£550.80
Amazon – stationary	£78.45
MFG - Fuel	£32.45
Optimum – card fee	£1.99
Amazon – post, Repeller, fixing, cover, broom	£140.35
Post Office – postage	£2.85

**December**

East Cambs Training – Tree Works	£3560.33
Gallagher Group – Insurance	£2334.93
CGM Group – Brangehill Annual Clearance	£1485.36
CPD Electrical – PAT Testing and alarm contact	£158.50

Wave - Water Allotments	£20.72
Wave - Water Pavilion	£38.04
HMRC, Wages and Expenses	£4938.46
Ligate PC - CILCA Course	£330.00
Elegance Cleaning - pavilion	£49.00
Thatch and Roses - flowers	£45.00
Neighbourhood-Plan - Work so far	£682.84
Royal British Legion - Poppy Wreath	£120.00
Amazon - bulbs, soap, grease nipples, soap	£64.74
eBay- lawnmower part and washing liquid	£66.27
Optimum - monthly fee	£1.99
MFG - Fuel	£75.30
<b>b) Direct Debits Made:</b>	
N Power - Street Light Energy	£32.44
EE - phone and internet	£41.92
<b>November</b>	
EE - phone and internet	£42.14
SSE - Electric	£107.19
N Power - street light energy	£35.74
British Gas	£50.86
<b>c) Income</b>	
Allotment Fees	£160.00
Pavilion Hire	£24.00
VAT Refund	£1177.62
ECDC - CIL	£243.40
LBW proposed, LD seconded to approve all payments, receipts, and bank reconciliations. Motion carried	

131222/11

DIARY DATES - 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023 @6pm Mepal Community Pavilion

Meeting closed at 18.39

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*K Peck*  
**Karen Peck**  
**Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer**  
**Mepal Parish Council**

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*Brian Rollason*  
**Brian Rollason**  
**Chairman**  
**Mepal Parish Council**