

MEPAL PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Karen Peck, email: clerk@mepalparish.org tel 01353 741066
Chairman: Mrs Lorna Williams

NOTICE OF MEETING: Mepal Parish Council - Full Council
TIME: 18.30
DATE: 25th July 2024
VENUE: Mepal Community Pavilion

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Williams – Chairman (LW), Sculthorpe (LS), Hickman (JH), Bradney (TB) and seven members of the public.

250724/1 CHAIRMANS WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

250724/2 TO RECORD APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Parish Councillor Knightley and Billimore, County Council Dupre and District Councillor Inskip – apologies accepted.

250724/3 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were made.

250724/4 TO RECEIVE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Both District and County Council reports had been added to the Parish Council website.

250724/5 TO SIGN AND APPROVE MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF: 27th June 2024

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the Full Parish Council meeting minutes of 27th June 2024 as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Motion carried. **Proposed LS, seconded JH**

250724/6 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.

The Chairman explained the open forum rules according to the standing orders.

A member of the public was unhappy that she had not received a formal reply as to why she couldn't hire the pavilion for free. They also raised concerns on the Grants Policy and the info only correspondence agenda items.

Another member of the public raised concern the speed that cars are travelling along the High Street. Could council consider whether the 20 mph limited could be applied for. Email to be sent to Clerk.

Another member of the public raised concern with the length of the grass in the village.

Another member of the public seconded previous comments.

Two members of the public said that they were present to talk about the flooding under 250724/7 (a).

250724/7 COUNCIL BUSINESS

a) Flooding – the council await the results of the inspections commencing on 12th August. Background on the issues: In September 2023 during a few days of persistent rain, the drains on the junction of New Road and High Street began backing up one by one. This peaked on 20th September 2023 with over a foot of water against 28 and 26 High Street, across the junction and down the road.

The fire brigade attended and used two water pumps for three hours to lower the water level. They were unable to offload into any nearby drains as the water was just circling back so instead had to lay approx. 60 meters of piping to offload into the adjacent fields.

Highways attended the next day and dropped sandbags at the residences. Highways also tried to clear the drains but to no effect.

This happened again multiple times over the next month but not to the same depth to risk the properties. On 20th October, levels increased again to approx. 1 foot deep against the properties. Highways sent a drainage lorry who took 8 lorry loads of water away to reduce the water level.

Highways and ADC tried to clear the drains again but were unable to clear the drains and therefore a CCTV audit was booked and took place on 1st November 2023.

Over the last 6 months there have continued to be multiple incidents of the drains overflowing, each of significance reported. On 6th Jan and then again on 6th July the water levels were up against the door of 28 High Street and up to the door on 26 High Street. This latest incident also included water breaching the house of 28 High Street despite in excess of 20 Sand Bags.

Whilst we have only experienced this issue since September 2023, we only purchased the house in December 2022. Following speaking with the council it appears this has been a recurring issue since at least 2020.

Following the CCTV audit in November, it has taken months of chasing to get the outcome of this which was effectively inconclusive.

After reaching out to the Chief Executive of Cambridgeshire Council, Nicola Burdon from the Drainage and Resilience Team came and did a site visit. She confirmed the CCTV audit did not provide any useful information. She proposed a plan of engineers inspecting the drainage network covering the North End of High Street, New Road, School Lane and Bridge Road, clearing the network as they go and following the network until it offloads into the drainage ditch which itself may need to be dug out.

This work is now planned to take place week commencing 12th August 2024.

b) Update on Play Area Grants.

The Council discussed the recent quotations. It was unanimously agreed to apply for grant funding for £16,250 (no VAT) from Mick George which will incur a CTP of £1868.75

Proposed LW, seconded TB

c) Success with Pride of Place Grant – phase 2

The Parish Council were delighted to have been successful in their application for a further grant from East Cambridgeshire District Council. The grant will fund the following:

Improvements to Species Rich Hedge, with the aim of increasing biodiversity (& community health & wellbeing) in our village's Playpark & Recreation Field, we will plant another 57 metres of Species Rich Hedgerow (a double row @ 4- 5 plants per metre), all UK grown, native species and a 16m single row Hedge (@ 3 plants per metre), to increase the depth of an existing Hedge. We will plant native naturalising bulbs such as Snowdrops, Crocus, Wild Daffodil & Wood Anemone. Following the huge success (with 40 volunteers), & ongoing positivity that resulted from our Spring 2024 nature project, a key aim of this project is to continue the previously unmet need of supporting villagers mental & physical health & grow the remarkable community spirit that came directly from our 'Restore Mepal's Nature' projects.

Hedge Plant Species With the aim of supporting as diverse a range of Insect, Bird, Plant & Invertebrate life as possible, the deep double row of Hedge will include species such as Hawthorn, Elder, Hazel, Dog Rose, Dogwood, & Crab Apple. Goat Willow Trees - specifically to support the local population of Purple Emperor & White Letter Hairstreak butterflies. Following several Ecologists site visits suitable plants for the conditions (clay), & aspect, have been chosen.

Bat, Bird, Hedgehog, & Swift boxes. To support Bats already using local buildings we would like to install boxes in the vicinity on council land. To support our last colony of Swifts in the village suitable space on the Pavilion building has been allocated to help Swifts. Nest boxes for House Sparrows, Starlings etc installed on council owned trees. Hidden deep in existing mature woodland, or within Dead Hedges, we would like to install two Hedgehog Nest boxes (designed with help from Dr Pat Morris & the Hedgehog Preservation Society)

Eco 'Friendship' Benches. To allow the planted areas to be accessible to all, including those with mobility issues. Providing a crucial place to sit, marvel, & 'be' within Nature.

Information signs Explaining species of Tree/Hedge, & their unique benefits to enhance community/future generations engagement & care of the Plants. Made 'in house' to keep costs down.

Wild/Dead Hedges. To increase the amount of life the Hedgerow can support, we would also like to install several 'Wild' Hedges to make good use of the brash created from pruning's. We hope this will provide nesting & shelter for species such as Wren, Robin, ++ Insects & Hedgehogs, whilst retaining the material on site, & avoiding chipping. We anticipate the total length of several Wild Hedges will be 34 metres. Posts spaced every 18inches (3 every metre).

Since our future depends on protecting 30% of the Planet's Lands & Oceans (for Nature), we hope by increasing the 'Life' of the Play Park & Recreation Field (currently used predominantly for play, football & dog walking), this project will help (albeit in a small way), towards this vital global goal. The project is also part of the villages 'Nature Recovery Plan' which will give much needed homes, shelter, food, roosting & nest sites etc, for many, whilst improving people's well-being.

Whilst probably not helping the highly endangered Turtle Doves (heard in 2023 & 2024 only a quarter of a mile away!), our A shaped, >2metre high thick hedge, with 2metre longer grass buffer zone on each side, will hopefully support such species as Yellowhammers, Song Thrush, Linnet, House Sparrow, Wren & Robin

- d) Joint Working Request from Witcham Parish Council: Mepal Road / Witcham Road 60MPH
The Parish Council has been approached by Witcham Parish Council regarding "speed limit issues" TB has volunteered, still need a second councillor.

250724/8

**PLANNING
TO DISCUSS**

CCC/24/065/FUL Witcham Meadlands, Block Fen Drove, Chatteris

Continued disposal of stable non-reactive hazardous waste with revised final contours and restoration (part retrospective). Creation of wet grassland on previously restored agricultural land.

The Parish Council discussed the application and had no comment.

24/00016/REFAPP appeal 24/00107/FUL 4 Sutton Road, Mepal

Extension above existing bungalow to form chalet bungalow, single storey front extension and garage extension - Appeal made to Secretary of State

The Council discussed the application and had no comment.

250724/9

FINANCE

1. To approve payments and Bank Reconciliation up to 30th June 2024

a) Online Payments (since 18.6.24 - July 2024):	
SSE - Electricity Pavilion	£90.14
HMRC, Wages, Expenses	£3385.29
Red Shoes Accounting - payroll	£63.00
b) Direct Debits Made (as of 18.6.24):	
EE - internet and phone	£57.17
N Power - streetlight energy	£50.38
National broadband - Pavilion	£42.00
British Gas - Gas Pavilion	£51.72
ICO - Data Protection	£35.00
Service Charge	£18.00
c) Income	
None	

All Payments, direct debits and bank reconciliations were unanimously **APPROVED**.

Proposed LS Seconded JH

250724/10

CORRESPONDENCE (INFO ONLY)

Parishioner - thanks for the Mepal Matters Biodiversity article and to thank the Parish Council for their continued hard work x 4

Member of the public - issue at Meadow Way Play Area

Member of the Public - Free usage of Mepal Community Pavilion

Member of the Public - Flooding

Member of the public - grass

Member of the Public - Hire of Pavilion for family event

Member of the Public - Hire of Pavilion for wedding

250724/11

DIARY DATES - 26th September 2024 at 6.30pm Mepal Pavilion

Meeting closed at 7:20pm

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Karen Peck
Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Mepal Parish Council
Issued: 26th September 2024

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L Williams
Chairman
Mepal Parish Council

DRAFT