

MILTON ERNEST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Milton Ernest Parish Council Meeting held on 10th July 2025 at 8:00pm at Milton Ernest Village Hall, Thurleigh Road.

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Alistair Ross (Chairman), Cllr Cristina Goldwin, Cllr Alan Dipple, Cllr Jess Sizer, Cllr Pam Lane and Cllr Rachel Atkinson.

In attendance: Natalie Humberstone (Clerk), Cllr Martin Towler

1 **Apologies for Absence:** No apologies received.

2 **Declarations of interest in items on the agenda:** None

3 **Public Open Session** – 4 residents in attendance.

A resident raised several queries regarding Thurleigh Road such as when the ANPR camera would be fixed on Thurleigh Road, along with the repainting of the Chevrons and the repair of the potholes.

The council advised that there were several ongoing discussions regarding Thurleigh Road.

Action: Thurleigh Road to be placed as a separate and regular agenda item.

A resident queried why the ownership of the Riverside View Play Park remained ongoing when he had previously advised MEPC that the park was owned by BBC and the vegetation surrounding the park should be maintained by MEPC. Cllr Ross explained that it was already clear and indeed two separate service requests had been raised to the Borough during June and July to get the condition of the park addressed.

As of this meeting there had been no response from BBC, therefore MEPC will be seeking escalation on this topic shortly. This Park was not included in the recent ROSPA report as it is not maintained by MEPC.

A resident provided an update on his investigation into the ownership of the Village Green. After completing a number of searches he was now attempting to complete paperwork using the Open Spaces guide on the registration of Village Greens. MEPC would be responsible for maintenance of the Village Green. To complete the paperwork he would need to provide a list of individual statements detailing what the village green has been used for over the years. MEPC discussed who should sign the completed paperwork.

Resolved: Cllr Ross to review and sign the completed paperwork before submitting

4 **To confirm the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 12th June 2025 and 18th June 2025**

The Chair advised that the minutes presented had been reviewed.

Resolved to approve the minutes as an accurate record.

5 **Clerk's report on actions**

- To email BBC to confirm who maintains the Riverside View park - **Ongoing**
- To email other clerks on how to gather online feedback –**Ongoing**
- To confirm the VAT reclaim schedule - **Ongoing**
- Request Bedford BC to provide timing to repair the sign outside the village hall – **Completed**
- To follow up with Community Heartbeat that the Defib order is received – **Completed**
- Contact BBC about the potholes and repainting on Thurleigh road – **Completed**
- Contact BBC to repair the paving footpath on Rushden Road – **Ongoing**
Part of the road had been repaired but BBC had not returned to complete the remainder of the repairs.

The Council noted that the Clerk and council members had reached out to BBC on a variety of items.

Action: Clerk to include Cllr Lane on emails to BBC.

Action: Cllr Lane to continue to contact BBC.

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6 Correspondence received since the last meeting (requiring council attention)

Clerk advised that an email had been received from “OpenReach” regarding Wavelength being placed on the property and access was required. The content of the email did not provide any detail but asked that the recipient open the attachments and sign the agreement. An attempt to contact OpenReach via telephone and email had yielded no responses.

7 Finance

- *To note the budget variance report*
The report was received – see appendix.
- *To approve payments and note income and balances*
Resolved to approve payments – see appendix.

8 Village playing fields

- *Review works completed to date and next work planned.*
All proposed works had been completed.
- *Discuss the ROSPA report and agree next steps*
The ROSPA report had been received with a number of areas regarding attention but these were medium and low risk only and will be addressed through short and medium term measures.
- *Proposals for new play equipment*
Cllr Sizer presented ideas for the Playing Field Project as the current play equipment required updating and a redesign. Three quotes would be obtained and the costs would include the removal and replacement of play equipment. Initial timing estimates indicated d MEPC will need the rest of the year to approve a design and two years to obtain funding for the project through grants, reaching out to local businesses and general fundraising. Up to £12K of reserves will be considered to put towards the new playing field equipment. Cllr Towler has confirmed a £1,000 donation as part of the annual ward’s grant for worthy causes.
- *Playing Field Inspector role*
The current playing field inspector has resigned. A review of the role and the litter picker role was underway. The playing field would be inspected by Cllrs Ross, Sizer and Dipple during the interim period until a new inspector was found.

9 Village welfare

- *To agree the draft Villager article*
Resolved: the article for the Villager was agreed.
- *Update on Grass Cutting*
Cllr Atkinson confirmed that Warners had returned to cut the section of the A6 which could not previously be completed due to the presence of road cones
Cllr Dipple queried whether BBC or MEPC should be maintaining the verges and common areas on Butterfield Court/Close and Starey Close, and was advised that it should be BBC. Cllr Goldwin advised that Highways had cut back the hedge in the area of Butterfield Court and that a maintenance schedule was going to be adopted. Cllr Lane is planning to meet with BBC Highways and would agree the details of the maintenance.
The Grass Cutting Plan to be brought to the September meeting.

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- *Relocation of the bench by the Village Farm House*

The item to be discussed at the September meeting. It would need to be determined whether the bench was concreted and the costs associated with the removal or replacement of the bench. Cllr Ross mentioned it might be more cost effective to buy a new bench finally

- *Discuss the plans in relation to the HGVs on Thurleigh Road*

Cllr Ross explained that the amount of HGVs travelling through the village and particularly on Thurleigh Road had been an ongoing concern. It was suggested that the ANPR camera being fixed and a sign being placed could deter and reduce the number of vehicles. The Clerk had reached out to BBC and Cllr Towler for a new road sign to be placed. Cllr Towler had reached out to Pigeon to place the road sign but they have declined. Cllr Towler requested that the MEPC carry out a HGV watch to record the number of HGVs travelling on the road.

Resolve the Council agree to complete a HGV watch

Action: Clerk to contact BBC to see what matters are currently on the work list.

Cllr Goldwin reminded the MEPC that Bulky Waste was taking place in August and requested for someone to distribute notices on cars and via letterboxes on Radwell Road opposite Riverside View and the cut through to Arkwright Road, advising that the bulky waste collection would be completed on 16 August at 11:00. This would need to be completed a week before to ensure that cars were not blocking the area.

Action: Cllr Ross to place notices regarding the bulky waste.

Action: Clerk to place the notice on the website and noticeboards.

10 Reports by Representatives

- *To receive a report back from the Parish Council Surgery*

The next meeting will be scheduled for the 23rd July 2025.

- *To receive a report from the Finance Working Group*

No update, although there is an Asset Register review planned for July '24

- *To receive an update on the Biodiversity Plan*

No updates.

- *Environmental volunteer group*

The Council gave thanks to the work that the group had undertaken over the past month.

- *To receive an update from the NDP working group*

Cllr Towler advised that funding had stopped for the revision of NDPs whilst the Borough 2040 plans were being updated to ensure that Universal Studios were considered as part of the process. There was no date as to when the plans would be finalised.

- *Events working group*

As part of the Playing Field Project fundraising events the events team had discussed the 7th September playing field event and the 12th October Scarecrow trail.

11 Events

- £6,500 was raised at the Village fete with £1,625 being donated to the council.

- Playing Field event – 7th September 2025

Cllr Ross requested that the finer points of the event were discussed with the working group before being presented to the council.

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Resolved the Council agree with the event taking place and requested that the events working group circulate a proposal with the finer details.

Resolved the Council agreed to the 12th October Scarecrow trail and requested that the finer details were circulated to the council for review.

Cllr Godwin advised that someone had approached her about making an anonymous donation towards the playing field project, and requested that the bank details were provided. Clerk advised that there were a number of ways for donations to be accepted and suggested that the funding for the playing field project could be donated into and kept in a separate account. MEPC currently had two accounts, one of which was not in use, so could be assigned for this purpose

Action: Finance Working Group to discuss the best way to accept donations and whether the funding for the playing field project should be held in a separate account.

12 Planning matters

- *To consider any planning applications received since the last meeting – includes any received after the agenda is issued up to the date of the meeting.*

APPLICATION NO: 25/01292/MAF Major Full and Change of Use Application

PROPOSAL: Solar farm with ancillary infrastructure.

LOCATION : Land East Of Twinwood Road Oakley And Clapham And Land South East Of Thurleigh Road Milton Ernest And Thurleigh

There was no objection to this planning.

- To note any planning applications decided by the borough council since the last meeting.

- **To confirm the status of the planning enforcement on Marsh Lane re the Fence Removal**

APPEAL BY: Symbiosis Care Ltd

PROPOSAL : Erection of 1.8M high, 11M long section of front facing boundary fence with concrete posts and shiplap timber panels (retrospective).

PLANNING NO: 23/00087/S73A

INSPECTORATE NO: APP/K0235/D/24/3349326

LOCATION : 24 Marsh Lane Milton Ernest Bedford Bedfordshire MK44 1RB

Decision: The appeal is dismissed.

Date of the Decision: 30 January 2025

Enforcement is in place and have advised that Symbiosis will need to reduce the height of the concrete posts to 1m and one side panel to 3m.

13 Borough Councillor Report

Cllr Towler advised

- Green bins had paused following the fire at the recycling centre and should resume in a week.
- Midland Road had reopened.
- EOC – The ambulance service have three sites in the east, the smallest one is located in Bedford with 103 employees located there. Discussions are still underway to find a way to keep the centre open by finding or building a new centre.

15 Short Public Open Session (5 Minutes)

A resident raised concern that the current route for the solar farm meant that the site traffic travelled through Milton Ernest. Cllr Towler advised that the batteries would be located in Milton Ernest near the fence on Twinwoods Road. Cllr Ross confirmed access is planned through the site from the entrance on the Thurleigh Road, leading to additional traffic on the A6 through Milton Ernest. Cllr Towler advised that any

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concerns in regard to the traffic levels against the plan could be directed to the Mayor to see if the plan could be revised, as well as to Sam Fox the temporary Chief Planner.

Action: Cllr Ross to compose and send the letter.

16 **Business for future agendas (No actions can be taken on items not on the agenda)**

17 — **Date of the next meeting:** 8pm 11th September 2025, Milton Ernest Village Hall.

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MEPC Banking Reconciliations - Payments July 2025

Date Paid	Balances - June 2025	Payee/Payer	Desc	Transfers	Receipts	Payments Gross	Cashbook Balance	Bank balance
							£ 27,225.23	£ 30,504.33
19 June 2025	Glass recycling	BBC	Glass recycling	Receipt	£ 822.68			
25 June 2025	Bank Charges	HSBC	Bank Charges	Payment		£ 8.00		
30 June 2025	Grass cutting grant	BBC	Grass cutting grant	Receipt	£ 891.48			
02 July 2025	Information Technology	1&1	1&1 - Internet	Payment		£ 4.20		
05 July 2025	Grass Cutting and hedge Riverside Meadow	Wamers	Wamers of BedfordInvoice 18072	Payment		£ 900.00		
05 July 2025	Grass Cutting and hedge Riverside Meadow	Wamers	Wamers of BedfordInvoice 18056	Payment		£ 450.00		
05 July 2025	Insurance	Clear Councils	Insurance Renewal	Payment		£ 954.78		
	Staff costs	Staff costs	Staff costs	Payment		£ 345.34		
	Staff costs	HMRC	HMRC - PAYE	Payment		£ 155.40		
Not yet paid	Playground Inspection	ROSPA Play Safety Ltd	Playground inspection - ROSPA	Payment		£ 124.80		
Not yet paid	Training	BATPC	Chairmanship Training C Goldwin	Payment		£ 45.00		
Not yet paid	Grass Cutting and hedge Riverside Meadow	Wamers	Wamers of BedfordInvoice 18148	Payment		£ 900.00		
Not yet paid	Hall hire	ME Village Hall	Village Hall - Hall Hire MEPC2502	Payment		£ 10.50		
Not yet paid	Hall hire	ME Village Hall	Village Hall - Hall Hire MEPC2503	Payment		£ 12.50		
Not yet paid	Membership/Affiliations	BATPC	BATPC - Subs	Payment		£ 188.00		
Not yet paid	General Maintenance	Huntree Fencing Ltd	Fencing around the village	Payment		£ 1,796.83		
Not yet received	Community Initiatives	The Community Heartbeat Solution	New Defibrillator	Payment		£ 2,904.00		
Not yet paid	Staff Costs - Clerk	Locum Clerk	Clerk to cover June meeting and Adhoc June meeting.	Payment		£ 102.40		
Not yet paid	Internal audit	J Betts	J Betts - Internal Audit	Payment		£ 160.00		
Not yet received	External audit	Mazars	Mazars LLP	Payment		£ 252.00		
							£ 26,109.66	

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Financial Year 2025/26

Balances - July 2025

Income	YTD (Actual) Gross	YTD (Actual) Net	Annual Budget 2025/26	Full year Forecast	Variance
Precept	8,578	8,578	17,156		
VAT reclaim	0	0			
CIL Income	0	0	0		
Other Income Grass cutting grant	891	891	849		
Other Income Book sales	0	0	0		
Other Income Summer fete	0	0	0		
Other Income Events	0	0	0		
Other Income Ward fund	0	0	891		
Other Income Glass recycling	1,106	1,106	1,625		
	1,999	1,999	3,365		
Total Income	10,577	10,577	20,521		
Outgoings					
Staff Costs - Clerk	1,423	1,423	4,000		
Clerks Office Allowance	0	0	312		
Staff Costs - Litterpicking & Playing Field Checks	250	250	1,200		
Staff costs	1,673	1,673	5,512		
Grass Cutting and hedge Riverside Meadow	3,678	3,065	5,225		
Annual Cut (Riverside Meadow)	0	0	499		
Clock and churchyard maintenance	0	0	1,000		
Playing field inspections	0	0	600		
Playground maintenance	0	0	0		
General Maintenance	1,797	1,497	200		
Tree works	0	0	800		
Open spaces & community facilities	5,475	4,562	6,830		
Internal Audit	160	160	150	160	10
External Audit	252	210	210		
ICO Annual Fee	0	0	35		
Insurance	955	858	700	954	254
Playing field rent and insurance	0	0	650		
Payroll fees	0	0	380		
Hall hire	122	122	120		
Bank Charges	24	24	0		
Information Technology	17	14	351		
Stationery/expenses	0	0	144		
Memorial wreath	0	0	20		
Membership/Affiliations	186	186	186		
Training	0	0	200		
Admin	1,716	1,574	3,022	3,286	264
Neighbourhood Watch	0	0	250		
Volunteer Group	0	0	200		
Village Xmas Tree	1,728	1,440	1,440	2,880	1,440
Events	65	65	250		
Ecology study	0	0	0		
Contingency (VAT)	0	0	0		
Other	1,793	1,505	2,190	3,620	1,440
The Villager	0	0	250		
Community Initiatives	3,133	2,649	300		
Grants	3,133	2,649	550	550	0
Total Outgoings	13,790	11,964	18,105	7,466	1,704

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